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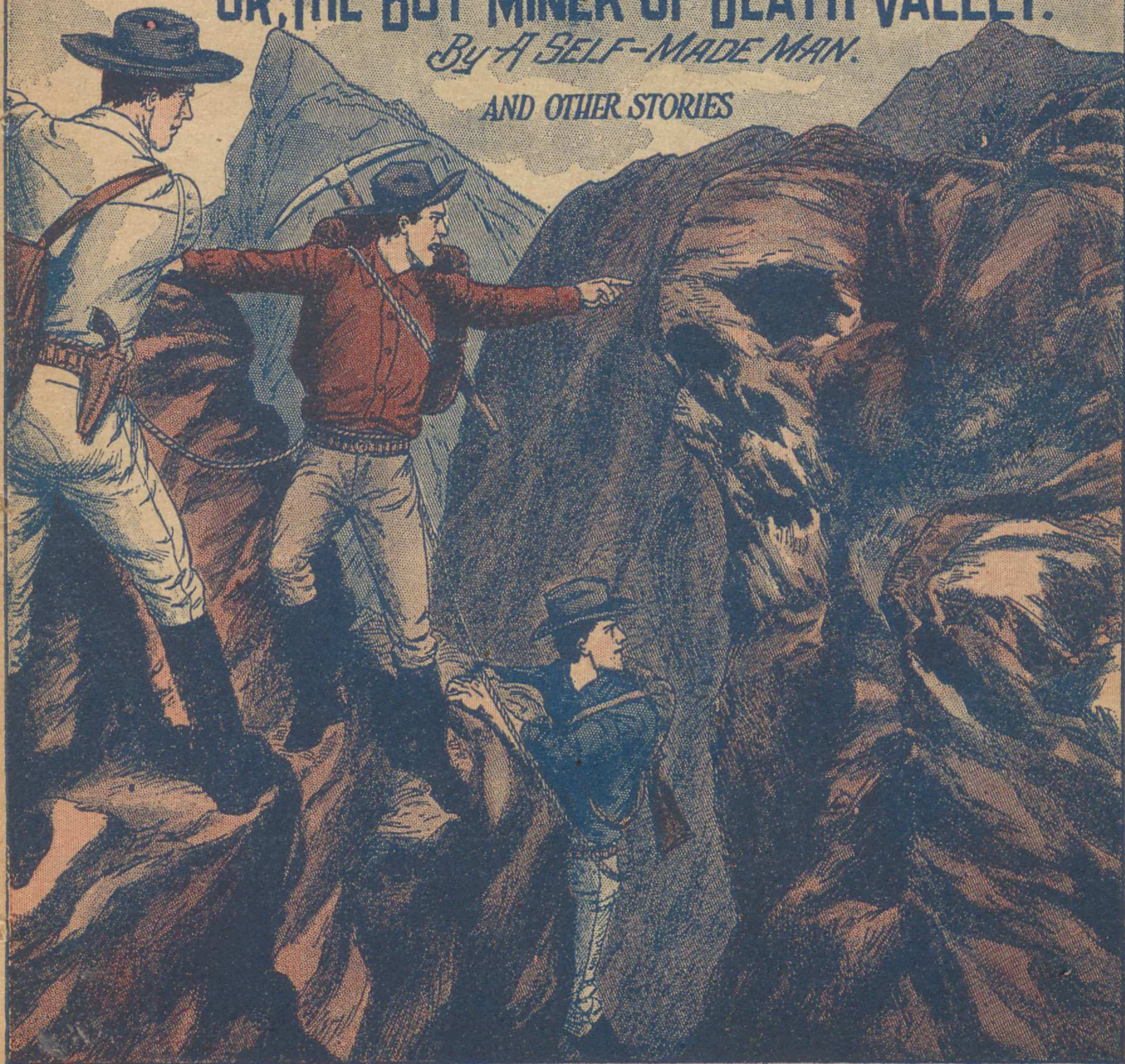
FAME AND FORTUNE WEEKLY

STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY.

THE PATH TO GOOD LUCK;
OR, THE BOY MINER OF DEATH VALLEY.

By A SELF-MADE MAN.

AND OTHER STORIES



"See!" cried Tom Collingwood, pointing across the fissure. "The Giant's Skull!" "My gracious!" exclaimed Bob. "So it is." Sam, lower down, gave a startled gasp. The three boys gazed awesomely at the curious rocky formation staring them in the face.

FAME AND FORTUNE WEEKLY

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The Path To Good Luck

OR, THE BOY MINER OF DEATH VALLEY

By A SELF-MADE MAN

CHAPTER I.—In the Grasp of the Storm

"This is simply fierce, Tom," said Bob Preston, in a tone of disgust, looking out into the night through the partially open door of a small tool-house close to the tracks of the Midland Central Railroad where he and Tom Collingwood had taken refuge from the storm three hours since and had been waiting in vain for a chance to resume their way back to Forksville, five miles distant, where they lived.

"Bet your life it is," replied his companion, with a sagacious nod.

"It's still raining like cats and dogs."

"That's what it is."

"And blowing to beat the band."

"I should say so."

"I am hungry enough to chew a pound of nails."

"Same here."

"How are we going to reach town?"

"Hoof it to the trolley when the storm lets up."

"When it does. That won't be before morning from the present outlook."

"Oh, not so long as that," replied Tom, encouragingly.

"The trolley is two miles away."

"I guess it's all of that."

"And the road must be ankle deep with mud by this time, without mentioning the puddles we're liable to flounder into in the dark," growled Bob.

Tom made no reply. The prospect before them of walking to the trolley line was not a particularly cheerful one.

Anyway it was not to be thought of at that moment with the sixty-mile gale blowing sheets of water against the wall of the tool-house. Tom Collingwood and Bob Preston were both orphans who boarded in the same house in Forksville, and worked side by side at the same bench in the Forksville Cutlery Works. They were also sworn friends and companions.

The special branch of the cutlery business they had learned was the manufacture of penknives, and after an experience of about four years at the trade they had become quite expert workers. Their job was rather an independent one as it was paid for by the piece. They were not compelled to work any stated number of hours a day.

After reporting in the morning they could quit when it pleased them, provided that they turned a certain amount of properly executed work out on the average. Of course the more hours they put in and the faster they worked the more money they received at the end of the week.

Until lately it had been their ambition to make all they could, and each had accumulated a nice little sum at the savings bank.

But a change had come over them within the last month.

This was especially the case with respect to Tom. He had got hold of a quantity of mining literature, had read every word of it with deep interest, and from that moment the cutlery business ceased to interest him. His ambition turned to fresh fields and pastures new.

In other words, he longed to go out West and embark in the mining business. The fifteen odd dollars a week he was making in the factory looked insignificant when compared with the fortunes that other people seemed to be picking up in the mines of Nevada and other places where the gold quartz was to be had. Boy like, he had only a very indefinite idea of how the gold was got at. He had lately read several stories about placer mining in the earlier days of the discovery of gold in California, Cripple Creek, and such places, when the first rush of prospectors and miners had confined themselves to the surface diggings, and he imagined that it was only necessary to secure a claim in some mining district where there was a stream of water within easy reach, dig up the pay dirt, wash out the gold dust and nuggets, and thus become rich in no time at all. He talked the matter over eagerly with Bob, and as his friend knew no more about the subject than himself, they both were of one mind—that digging for gold was an easy road to fortune. The question that was now agitating both lads was whether they should throw up their jobs at Forksville, which was known as the Sheffield of America, and start out West to become miners.

On the day our story opens they had taken the afternoon off to go fishing in a branch of the Snake River, their favorite recreation, and to talk the matter over with the object of reaching a conclusion. The fishing ground was about six miles from Forksville, near the line of the Mid-

land Central Railroad, and the trolley car took them within two miles of the spot. After leaving the trolley line they footed it along a country crossroad. While it was a dull looking afternoon they had not expected it to storm. That was where their calculations failed them, for after they had been fishing an hour or so, rain began to fall so briskly that they had to take refuge in an old hut near the bank of the river.

Dusk came on about half-past five, and then the weather showed some signs of clearing. They took advantage of the fact to start down the railroad toward the road leading to the trolley. As they passed a small toolshed used by the section men the storm burst over the landscape afresh, and with greater fury than ever. The wind almost swept them off their feet, and in a few minutes they would have been drenched to the skin but that Tom's sharp eyes noticed that through some oversight the toolshed had not been locked. Calling his companion's attention to the fact, the boys made a dash for the shed and were soon under cover. Here they waited hour after hour for the storm to pass away, but it kept on as bad as ever. It began to look as if they'd have to stay in the shed all night, which wasn't a pleasant reflection, as they were by this time as hungry as a pair of hunters. After the conversation with which this chapter opens had come to an abrupt halt, silence reigned in the toolshed for a few minutes. Then Tom took his jack-knife out of his pocket and began to tap on a succession of sounds on the wheel of the handcar on which the boys were seated. Bob suddenly pricked up his ears, took out his jack-knife, and when Tom stopped he began to tick off similar sounds on the wheel nearest to him. What were they doing?

Simply this—Tom had resumed the conversation through the agency of the Morse telegraphic alphabet, and Bob was answering him.

In explanation of this curious turn of affairs we need only say that six months since Tom had got the idea into his head that he would like to be a telegraph operator. He had got acquainted with the night operator in the Midland Central train despatcher's office at Forksville, and after several visits to the office he became infatuated with the sound of the telegraph instrument. He prevailed upon his friend, the operator, to instruct him in the art of transmitting words by sound. He was an apt and enthusiastic learner and soon had the rudiments down fine.

After awhile it became tiresome to practice by himself, so he interested Bob in the matter, taught him all he knew, and for some time thereafter the boys would do a large part of their talking by the Morse alphabet.

It especially amused them to talk across the table at their boarding-house by using a fork and a plate or saucer. Then they would sometimes make fun of the other boarders just to amuse themselves. One evening, however, this entertainment received a rude shock. A vinegary looking young lady came to board at the house, and the first night she appeared at the table. Bob piped her off in no very complimentary terms. The new boarder, unfortunately for the boys, happened to be a telegraph operator. She instantly understood what Bob was saying about her. The moment he stopped to receive Tom's

reply she chipped in with her own fork on her plate in rather loud and forceful accents, and the few words she said in the Morse alphabet put a stop to any more amusement on the boys' part on that occasion.

To resume the thread of our story, this is what Tom ticked off to Bob:

"Say, Bob, what's the matter with our counting the ties to town instead of wading through the mud two miles to the trolley? It's only three miles further, and the roadbed is good and solid."

"Suits me when the weather clears," Bob ticked back in the darkness.

"It isn't raining near as hard as it was five minutes ago."

"That's right, but it may come on again any moment."

"We'll wait and see."

There was a pause in the sounds and then Bob began to click off something about their mining project, and Tom answered him.

Thus fifteen minutes passed, during which the rain ceased altogether and the wind decreased a good bit. Finally Tom jumped off the hand-car and looked out at the night. The storm seemed to be over, though the sky was still overcast.

"It's clearing up," he said. "Let's start off."

"Hold on," said Bob; "what time is it?"

Tom struck a match and consulted his silver watch.

"Five minutes of ten."

"Then we can't go yet awhile," returned Bob.

"Why not?"

"We might get run down by the night express."

"Not if we keep our eyes open."

"Suppose it overtook us in the middle of the bridge?"

"We can stick to the up track, can't we, and let it go by?"

"But there's a local comes along that track about the same time."

"If the local comes along first we can step across to the other track until it passes."

"They might both show up at the same time."

"Not likely."

"Suppose we miss our footing crossing the girders in the darkness? It's a drop of thirty feet to the street below, and that's full of rocks."

"Any more objections to the railroad?" laughed Tom Collingwood, reseating himself on the hand-car.

"I could mention several more. We might find a washout, or the bridge down, or——"

"The track under water."

"No; not much danger of that."

"Why not, where it skirts the marsh beyond the cutting?"

"That's so. I didn't think of that."

"Well, I could sweep away some of your objections if you're game to take a chance."

"What kind of a chance?"

"Beating the express to the cut. We've plenty of time to do it."

"I don't understand what you mean."

"What are we sitting on?"

"A hand-car."

"Exactly. Suppose we run her out on the track and work her down as far as the cut, lift her off on to the quarry branch until after the express passes, put her back on the line and continue on to the yards at Forksville? That will warm us

up, save shoe leather, and we'll avoid counting the bridge girders."

"Your idea isn't half bad," admitted Bob.

"I should say not."

"But there's one objection."

"What's that?"

"We are likely to meet the track walker who goes over this section of the line before the express is due to see that the track is clear."

"Suppose we do?"

"He'll hold us up and give us Hail Columbia."

"We won't give him a chance to head us off. He won't see us on such a night as this until we're right upon him. Then he'll take us for section hands on special service."

"Well, I'm game to make the run if you are."

"That's the way to talk, Bob. Kick the door open and we'll run the car out."

"Why not wait until the express has gone by, then we needn't derail at the cut?"

"I don't feel like waiting twenty minutes or half an hour more. I want to get alongside a good square meal just as soon as I can."

"All right," said Bob. "I'm with you."

The two boys ran the hand-car out of the small shed not far from the main track where they had taken refuge from the storm, pushed it along the curving rail till they reached the roadbed, and then shifted it on to the down track.

"Get up and I'll give her a start," said Tom to his companion.

Bob Preston mounted the car and seized the forward handle which he began to work up and down slowly as Tom pushed from behind. As soon as sufficient momentum had been applied to the car, Tom sprang on to the platform and caught hold of the other handle.

"Now, then, let her go, Bob. Work lively. We ought to reach the cut in ten or twelve minutes."

CHAPTER II.—Telegraphing Without Instruments.

The boys got down to work, for they had quite a distance to go to reach the steel girder bridge and the cut beyond. They had maybe half an hour leeway of the night express, and they expected to let it pass them at the cut.

The Snake River ran whirling and boiling under the bridge, and a hundred yards further on was a big stone culvert built to accommodate a narrow but swift branch of the same river. The boys knew the road very well for they had been over it several times on a hand-car with the section men of that neighborhood. The foreman of the gang was a particular friend of Bob's and the boys sometimes went to the different places where the men were employed to level up the tracks and attend to the roadbed. This was a constant and very important duty performed on every mile of the division, just as it is done on every railroad in the country, for the ponderous locomotives now in use, as well as the heavy sleepers and big freight cars, bear hard upon the roadbed these days, and to prevent accidents the line has got to be gone over, yard by yard, perpetually in order to keep the track straight. Bolts and fish-plates are continually becoming loose and must be attended to, and the

job of looking after such things is up to the section foreman. The hedges and fields flashed by in the darkness as Tom and Bob applied their muscular strength to the handles of the hand-car.

Clickety clack! Clickety clack!

That was the kind of music the wheels made every time they hit the dividing line between the rails. The way was dark, lonesome and silent, for the storm had hushed the insect voices of the night. At length they heard the dull, rushing sound of the Snake River as it dashed along under the steel girder bridge. The ponderous arms of the bridge presently rose out of the gloom ahead, and in a few minutes they were humming across the steel span. The culvert was right ahead, and a quarter of a mile beyond that lay the cut where they were to wait for the express to pass them.

Suddenly the moon sailed out for a moment between the scudding clouds and briefly illumined the track ahead. It was a providential circumstance, and it was also fortunate that Tom's eyes were sharp and that they glanced down the line as he pulled up the handle of the hand-car. What he saw only a few yards ahead sent his heart into his mouth and brought a warning cry to his lips.

Half of the culvert had disappeared and a yawning hole of many yards in width lay in their path. The foundation of the part nearest the on-rushing hand-car had no doubt been weakened by the river, aided by the weight and jar of passing trains, and the swollen water caused by the late storm had completed its undoing.

At any rate it was now a wreck.

Tom saw the car could not be stopped in time to save it from going over into the chasm, so he yelled out to his companion:

"Jump, Bob! For heaven's sake, jump quick! The culvert is gone."

He relinquished his hold on the handle and sprang off into the space between the rails. He went down on his hands and knees, but was soon on his feet. Bob turned a startled glance behind him, saw his peril and jumped also.

He was not as fortunate as Tom, for he turned a complete somersault, and but for a network of telegraph wire that lay close to the edge of the break he might have slipped over into the river.

As the hand-car crashed down into the abyss, Tom rushed forward and seized Bob by the hand.

"Not hurt, old chap, are you?" he inquired anxiously.

Bob did not immediately reply. The breath had been shaken out of his body and he was half stunned. But he soon pulled himself together, much to Collingwood's relief.

"Gee whiz!" he palpitated, "I thought it was all over with me."

"Oh, you're worth a dozen dead boys yet," replied Tom, cheerfully.

Bob looked into the chasm.

"This is a bad break and no mistake," he said.

"Bad!" gasped Tom, who was alive to the exigency of the moment, "it means destruction to the express and the local, both due at this point in a very short time, unless the trackwalker has been here, discovered the washout and notified the despatcher's office at Forksville to hold the local and to telegraph Block House 16 up the line to stop the express at that point."

"My gracious!" buttered Preston. Then he

added: "Suppose he hasn't got on to the trouble yet?"

"I don't like to suppose any such thing. It's his duty to go over the track in time to allow him ample leeway to return to his hut at the cutting and send in a telephone message."

"At any rate our further progress down the line is cut off," said Bob.

"No matter about us. I'm thinking about those trains. I'd like to be sure that the news is known at the despatcher's office."

"I don't see how you can find out," replied Bob.

Tom did not reply, but looked down at the tangle of wires lying near his feet. The pole that had held the wires aloft at this end of the culvert had done down in the wreck and the top end with the cross-piece had snapped off. All the wires appeared to be intact except the top one, which Tom knew to be the railroad company's wire. That was severed within a yard or so of the glass bulb around which it was isolated.

"What are you looking at?" asked Bob, curiously.

"The wires," replied Tom shortly.

"If we only had instruments you could send a message to the despatcher's office and let the night operator know about the accident to the culvert," said Bob.

"What's the use of talking?" replied Tom, brusquely. "We haven't got instruments."

"Even if we had we couldn't get the despatcher's office, for neither of us know the call."

"I do," answered Tom, sharply. "It's JP-11."

"Is it? Well, I'm thinking it won't do us any good."

"I've got an idea," went on Tom. "I don't know whether I could work it."

"What's your idea?"

"Harvard, the night operator at the despatcher's office, the chap who taught me how to telegraph, told me of a way by which a message could be sent without instruments under certain conditions, in case of emergency."

"He did?" exclaimed Bob, eagerly. "How can it be done?"

"I have no time to explain, but I've a great mind to try the plan, and then you'll see how it's done. It may be only possible with an expert, in which case it will be a failure with me. The urgency of the case, I think, warrants a trial. Do you see the top wire? The broken one?"

"Sure," replied Bob.

"Unwind it from the brass holder and pull it in so as to get as much slack as possible. Do you understand?"

Bob understood and proceeded to obey directions. While he was thus engaged Tom hunted for the other broken end and soon found it lying on the ground by itself. Interrupted communication he knew had already told the operator that something was wrong somewhere up the line with the wire. He had probably surmised that the storm had blown a pole down and broken the company's wire at any rate. Tom hauled in on the wire and made as much slack as he could, and by that time Bob was ready with the other end in his hand. Before making another move Tom went to the broken top of the pole where he had seen a strip of insulating material fluttering in the wind. He tore it into two pieces, wrapped one piece around the part of the broken wire he

held in his hand and the other about the wire Bob held. Then he took the two ends in his hands, one end in each, and began to touch the points of the wire together and separate them, thus connecting and breaking the circuit.

Bob watched his movements with excited interest. Over and over Tom repeated the call of the despatcher's office at Forksville, doing it as skillfully as possible under the circumstances.

When he had repeated it several times he thrust out his tongue, placing one end of the broken wire on one side of it and the other end on the other side. For some moments the boy stood thus, his whole attention concentrated on his experiment. There was no result, and a disappointed expression came over his features.

Taking the wires from his tongue Tom repeated the call over again. Once more he applied the ends of the wire to his tongue. Suddenly he gave a start and a thrill passed through his body. The night operator at the despatcher's office had recognized and was answering his call.

CHAPTER III.—Saving the Express

Tom could feel the successive shocks pass through his tongue, which is an extremely sensitive part of the human body, as the night operator at the despatcher's office answered his call.

Tom at once removed the wire from his mouth, and by touching the points together slowly spelled out the following words:

"Tom Collingwood. Am working without instruments, using the ends of the broken wire. Can you understand? Answer slowly."

Tom again applied the points of the wires to his tongue. The answer came back to him; Harvard, no doubt greatly astonished, having taken the tip to work slowly.

"I get you O. K. Where are you, Collingwood, and what does this mean?"

"At the southern end of the culvert, which has been washed away. All the wires are down. Hold the night local, for trains can't pass this point."

Bob in the meantime had been following his chum's movements with the most intense interest and expectation. As soon as he heard Tom sending in words he knew that communication had been established with the train despatcher's office, and he uttered an exclamation of astonishment as well as satisfaction. He had sense enough not to interrupt his friend while he was engaged in this important business.

"Do you mean to say the culvert is gone?" came back the words to Tom.

"Yes," answered the boy.

"Great Scott," unconsciously telegraphed Harvard.

"Join the wire so I can call up Block 16."

Tom knew that the operator intended to try and stop the express at that point and he quickly obeyed.

"I got Harvard all right, Bob," said Tom, his voice quivering with excitement.

"I saw you did," replied his chum. "What are you doing now?"

"I've connected the circuit so the operator can communicate with Block House 16 for the purpose of getting the express."

"Will he be in time?" asked Bob, feverishly.

"I can't tell."

"If the express has passed that block how can it be stopped?"

The faint distant scream of a locomotive whistle from up the line was at that moment borne to the ears of the two boys.

"Too late!" gasped Tom, almost dropping the wires. "There's the express now passing the siding near Prescott."

"What's to be done? It will be here in four minutes," palpitated Bob.

Tom gazed wildly around as though searching for some means to prevent the apparently inevitable disaster. The night express had passed the block house and could not be stopped by telegraph. In fact it looked as though nothing short of a miracle could save the train. At that moment Tom's eyes were attracted by a glimmer of light on the other side of the broken culvert. He shaded his eyes and gazed eagerly through the darkness.

"I believe there's a lantern yonder," he said, in quivering tones.

"That won't do us any good if it is," said Bob. "It's across the chasm"

Tom made no reply, but rushing to the edge of the break, grasped the network of wires and swung one leg across them.

"What are you going to do?" asked the astonished Bob.

"Get that lantern if I can. The express must be signalled at all hazards, and the lantern is our only hope."

"You'll never get across and back in time," said Bob.

Tom made no answer, for he was already swinging over the rushing river, making his precarious journey as fast as he could. The distance to be traversed was not far, but the wires swung and sagged under his weight, for they were not accustomed to be put to such a purpose.

Fortunately the broken top-piece of the lost pole was anchored to a small section of the culvert that still stood on that side of the stream, and by this means the wires were held fairly taut. It took Tom just a minute to cross.

As the boy dashed forward and reached for the lantern which stood burning between the down rails, where it had no business to be, he almost stumbled over the figure of a man stretched motionless across the track.

Tom guessed at once that this must be the track walker, who had been stricken down, probably at the moment the culvert had given way.

The boy had no time to see whether he was dead or simply unconscious. Grasping the lantern he rushed back to the edge of the broken masonry. With the lantern swinging on his arm he pulled himself across the chasm with the same feverish eagerness and speed he had displayed in crossing from the other side.

As he reached the end of the break Bob bent down and assisted him up on to the firm ground. Then Tom, without exchanging a word with his chum, dashed off in the direction of the steel girder bridge, 350 feet way. His feet fairly flew over the ground for the precious moments left to signal the express were very few by this time.

In fact, Tom could hear the low vibrations of

the rails as the ponderous train came dashing along at a speed of fifty miles an hour.

The engineer always slackened up a bit as soon as he came around the long curve and sighted the bridge, but even at that momentum of the heavy train, unless checked at a sufficient distance to enable its velocity to be full overcome by the air-brakes, was likely to carry it over the distance between the bridge and the culvert and into the river. The fate of the train and all on board depended wholly on Tom, and the boy fully realized that fact.

At last he reached the edge of the masonry that carried the steel framework of the bridge. The thunder of the approaching train was now in his ears. How far it was away he could not judge, but he expected to see the glaring headlight swing around the curve a short distance ahead at any moment.

What was he to do?

The situation was terrible. If he tried to cross the girders, which were wide apart and smothered by the darkness, he would probably meet the flying locomotive half way and be dashed to atoms. If he stayed where he was and swung the lantern, the engineer would hardly be able to check his train in time to avoid disaster. He had no time to consider the matter. He must either push ahead at once or remain where he was.

He never knew afterward how he made up his mind to do what he did, but he had a dim recollection that the inspiration came as he hung back a second or two on the brink of that awful journey. It occurred to him to jump from girder to girder as far as he could go towards the other side, and if the engine reached the bridge before he could get to the end of the span, to swing his lantern wildly and then drop between two of the cross-bars, taking every risk of catching one of the bars by his fingers to save him from going headlong into the river.

It was a heroic effort, in the face of almost certain death, to save the express.

Tom sprang forward, swinging his lantern so that he could distinguish the position of the next girder ahead and make the leap with sufficient accuracy. The roar of the oncoming train seemed to shake the very earth. The bridge trembled. The boy felt the vibrations growing stronger every moment. He was now half way across.

Would he have time to complete the distance?

A sudden glare shot up through the trees around the curve as the fireman of the locomotive opened the furnace door to throw in more coal. As Tom alighted on the next girder the headlight of the engine shot into view.

He was caught near the centre of the bridge with but a few seconds in which to signal the engineer and make his leap for death or possible safety. He lost no time in swinging the lantern in the way he had seen the yard men do when at night they had to stop an engine somewhere along the track.

Only his movements were more erratic and frantic. The wide-awake engineer, however, saw the flashing of the red light in an instant, and recognizing the signal which portended trouble ahead, he reversed the drivers and whistled "down brakes," at the same time setting the air-brakes hard and fast. The cars jarred so heavily

and suddenly one upon the other that passengers in the ordinary coaches were thrown about in heaps, while those who occupied the sleepers, and were either in their bunks or preparing to get into them, were almost as roughly handled. The utmost consternation was aroused throughout the train, and the first impression that prevailed was that they had run into a train ahead. Forgetful of his danger, of the possibility of his losing his balance on the narrow cross-bar which supported him, Tom continued to swing his lantern with the red side toward the train, and to shout from sheer excitement, until the great locomotive thundered down upon the girder bridge. Just as he made the leap that was to decide his fate he saw the white face of the engineer, who was leaning far out of the cab window glaring straight at him.

The fireman was swinging out by the iron handles attached to the side of the cab and of the tender. Then flinging the lantern from him, Tom sprang downward at the next iron girder. His fingers closed on the cold iron, his body swung under him, and for a moment it seemed as if his hold would slip. But no; his grip held firm long enough for him to throw one arm across the girder, and there he oscillated a few times like the pendulum of a dying clock, and at last he hung straight downward above the roaring river.

CHAPTER IV.—Bob Escapes from a Desperate Situation.

Tom heard the smash of glass as the lantern was struck by the pilot of the locomotive and shivered to pieces. He felt the steel framework of the girder bridge tremble under the big engine as it passed over him, the hot cinders and scalding drops of water falling for a second around him. It seemed that the long train would never pass, and yet but a few seconds elapsed before they were gone and he was free to climb back on top of the girder. As he knelt clinging to the iron with both hands, shivering as if with an ague from the reaction which now set in, he strained his misty eyes ahead for a sight of the train in the darkness.

Had his mission failed and the cars gone into the river? He could not tell, yet it seemed to him he must have heard the terrible crash they would have made in falling.

Slowly he dragged himself to the outer edge of the girder bridge and straddled one of the rails.

To save his life he could not return to the solid ground by leaping from girder to girder as he had done to meet the train. He had no light now to guide such a course, and his nerves would have failed him. So he just dragged himself along the rail, surmounting each cross-piece as he came to it. It was slow and laborious, but it was safe and sure. In this way he finally reached the masonry and stepped up on to the roadbed. In the meantime the locomotive had been brought to a standstill within a yard or two of the broken culvert. The engineer and his fireman leaped to the ground and gazed down into the chasm whose peril they had escaped by the noble act of Tom Collingwood.

"My heavens!" gasped the engineer, "we barely missed it. That signal alone saved us. It seemed

to be a boy that swung it, and heaven pardon us, we ran him down."

"Nothing could have saved him out there on the girders," said the fireman. "No power on earth could have stopped the train before it struck him."

"He is a young hero, whoever he is."

At that moment up stepped Bob Preston.

"Hello, my lad," exclaimed the engineer, almost startled by his sudden appearance out of the gloom. "You're not—no, no, you could not be the boy who signalled me and saved the train."

"No, sir," replied Bob, cheerfully, for he was rejoiced to know that the express was safe; "that was Tom Collingwood, my chum."

"Then Heaven save his soul," said the engineer, taking off his cap with a feeling of respect toward the boy he supposed to be lying crushed and managed at that moment upon the girder bridge.

"What do you mean?" demanded Bob, turning white at the words. "You do not mean that—"

"He is dead, my lad. We ran him down in the middle of the girder bridge. He could not escape unless he had jumped into the river, and he did not do that, for I was looking down at him when the pilot smashed the lantern and went over him like a flash."

Bob grabbed the begrimed engineer by the sleeve, looked pathetically into his face, and then he burst into tears. At that moment the conductor came running up, followed by the express agent, baggage men, one or two postal clerks and others.

"What's the trouble?" asked the train mogul.

The engineer pointed to the broken culvert.

"My gracious!" cried the conductor, "you were signalled just in time it seems."

"Yes," said the engineer, "I was. By a boy, the comrade of this young fellow," pointing to the weeping Bob. "He saved the express at the cost of his life."

"At the cost of his life!" ejaculated the conductor.

"Yes. He gave the signal from the center of the bridge, and—the locomotive was upon him before you could say Jack Robinson. It was hard luck for the young hero, but he should have jumped to the river and taken his chance."

"Poor fellow!" said the conductor, pityingly. "So he was your friend, young man?" he added, looking at Bob.

"Yes, sir," replied Preston, gulping down his grief.

"What was his name, and what is yours?"

"Tom Collingwood, and mine is Bob Preston."

"It will be sad news for you to carry to his parents. Where do you live?"

"He had no parents. He was an orphan like myself. I live in Forksville, and Tom and I roomed together."

"I suppose you both discovered the break in the culvert, and he went forward to head off the express?"

"Yes, sir. Tom crossed the river here on the wires to get a lantern we saw on the other side."

"You did not meet with the track walker, then?"

"No, sir."

"I can't understand why we were not held up at Block 16, unless the culvert collapsed but a

short time ago, after the track man had been over the line."

"I can't tell you when the break occurred. The culvert was down when we arrived, fifteen or twenty minutes ago. Tom telegraphed the train despatcher's office at Forksville and had the up local, No. 23, held back."

"He did? He was an operator, then? How happened he to have the instruments?"

"We had no instruments."

"You had none!" exclaimed the surprised official. "How then did you get into communication with the train despatcher's office?"

As Bob started to explain a number of passengers came up and quite a crowd surrounded Preston.

Many of the passengers shuddered as they began to realize from a glance at the broken culvert the danger they had escaped. At that moment the whistle of a locomotive was heard on the north side of the break in the line. An engine and a single car, having on board the division superintendent and several other railroad men, were coming out of the cut. A great deal of anxiety was felt in the yards at Forksville over the fate of the night express. The operator in the train despatcher's office had, as we have seen, tried to get in communication with the night man at Block House 16. He had just received the answer to his call when the whistle of the express caused Tom Collingwood to disconnect the wire, and he did not bring the ends together again. The operator, therefore, could not talk to the man at Block House 16, and remained in ignorance of the state of affairs south of the culvert. The division superintendent was notified, and he ordered one of the yard locomotives to be hitched on to a car, and started for the scene of trouble. Bob had just finished his story of how Tom had telegraphed to Forksville without instruments when Tom came up on the outskirts of the crowd. He supposed that Bob was the center of attraction and sprang on to the pilot of the locomotive in order to see what was going on.

"Hi, there, Bob!" he shouted.

Bob swung around as if he had been shot and saw his chum standing well above the crowd.

"Tom! Tom!" he cried, in great joy, "you were not killed then?"

"Killed! Certainly not."

The engineer, fireman, conductor and others turned their gaze on Collingwood. The two former fairly gaped at Tom, for it seemed to be the ghost of the lad they thought they had run down.

"Is that the boy who saved the train?" asked the conductor. "The one you thought you ran down on the girder bridge?"

The engineer pushed his way up to Tom and saw that he was good flesh and blood.

"Give me your hand, my lad," he cried with earnest thankfulness. "How ever did you manage to escape?"

Tom explained.

"Well, you have a wonderful nerve for a boy of your years," said the engineer admiringly, and every one present echoed the sentiment. Somebody called for three cheers for Tom Collingwood and they were given with a will. By this time the division superintendent appeared on the edge of the opposite side of the culvert. He had found the senseless track walker whom he ordered to

be carried to the car. He saw that the night express had been halted at the very brink of disaster, and he felt mighty thankful. He shouted across the chasm, and the conductor stepped up and replied to him, detailing the circumstances as far as he knew them.

"Where is the boy?" asked the super.

"We've got him here."

"What did you say his name is?"

"Tom Collingwood. He lives in Forksville."

"Tell him to call at my office to-morrow morning."

"Yes, sir."

"Notify the passengers that they will be transferred in the course of an hour to a train that will be backed up here from Forksville. We'll have material brought here to temporarily bridge the break so the people, baggage, express and mail matter can be safely transferred across to this side."

Tom was made a lion of by the passengers as soon as the facts became generally known throughout the train. A number of well-known politicians were on the express, and they had Tom brought into the smoking compartment of one of the sleepers, and got the story from his own lips. One of them went through the cars and collected \$150 for Tom. They themselves added enough to bring the purse up to \$500. This was presented to him with the grateful acknowledgment of the passengers for what he had done in their behalf. About half-past eleven the train that was to carry the passengers, their baggage, the mail and other matter to their destination, appeared with a flat car attached bearing a working crew and the material necessary to temporarily bridge the chasm. In due time everybody and everything was transferred to the waiting train, which started north towards Forksville.

Inside of ten minutes the two boys were set down at the station in town and then the train went on. The very first thing they did was to make a break for an all-night restaurant and order a square meal. The way they disposed of the eatables made the waiter think they hadn't eaten in a week.

"I don't think I ever ate anything that tasted half so good," said Bob, pushing his plate away.

"Nor I," agreed Tom; "but that's because we were so desperately hungry."

"We were hungry for a fact. Now I feel real comfortable," said Bob in a contented tone. "We had the adventure of our lives to-night, or rather you had, for I played only second fiddle in the affair. If we decide to go west, I'll bet we'll not come across anything more thrilling. You had as narrow a squeak for your life in front of that locomotive as you'll ever have if you live to tell tale. I'll bet you couldn't do it again and come out as you have done without a scratch."

"I guess you're right, Bob," answered Tom. "Well, if you've eaten all you want to, we'll start for home. I'm tired."

CHAPTER V.—Tom and Bob Learn Something New About the Mining Industry.

The morning papers of Forksville had graphic stories of the escape of the night express from destruction at the broken culvert. Full justice

was done Tom Collingwood, who was called a real hero, and whose thrilling experience in signalling the engineer of the express from his precarious foothold in the center of the girder bridge was set forth in glowing language by the newspaper men. In fact, Tom was the most talked-of person that morning in Forksville. He reported at the cutlery at the regular time, worked two hours, during which time he was the object of much admiration from his fellow workmen, and then left to keep the appointment with the division superintendent of the Midland Central Railroad at his office in the yard.

The super had a long talk with him, at the close of which he assured Tom that he would be suitably rewarded by the company for his valuable services. The division superintendent had already telegraphed the facts to the general manager of the road at New York City, and he now prepared a fuller account to be forwarded in an official envelope as required by the regulations. At the next meeting of the directors Tom Collingwood received a vote of thanks for saving the night express, and the sum of \$5,000, both being forwarded in care of the division superintendent, who presented the money and the letter of thanks and commendation signed by the president of the road to Collingwood.

"You're rich, Tom," said Bob, when his chum showed him the check. "That's \$5,000 you've made by your nerve in the face of a great emergency. Still it hardly pays for the great risk you ran on the girder bridge. You came within an ace of being killed."

"I didn't do it with any expectation of being rewarded for it, Bob. No amount of money would have tempted me on the bridge that night. I simply considered it to be my duty to try and save all those lives that were at stake in the train, even at the risk of my own life. I am sure you would have done the same, Bob, if you had been in my shoes."

"The spirit might have been willing, but whether my courage would have stood the test I cannot say. I think you have a great deal more than me. At any rate, your courage can never be questioned after what you did that night."

Tom smiled and said nothing. He put the money in a couple of savings banks, for no one bank would accept over \$3,000, and worked as diligently as ever at his trade. That is not saying that he had given up the idea of going West and embarking in the mining business. He was bent on taking Bob with him, and Preston hadn't come to a definite decision in the matter as yet.

One evening when Tom and Bob entered the dining-room they found a new boarder at the table. The boarding mistress had given him the vacant seat alongside of Collingwood. The boys regarded the addition to the establishment with not a little curiosity.

He was an old man whose skin was tanned to the color and consistency of leather. His small bright eyes were deeply sunken under beetling brows. His hair was an iron gray in color, and he had plenty of it, for it hung down several inches below the collar of his rough-looking sack coat. His seamed and horny hands told of hard work in the open air and lots of it. Altogether he was a queer looking old chap and naturally attracted some attention. He looked at the two

boys who, as we have already remarked, faced each other across the table, and his twinkling eyes took them in from head to foot at a glance. The boarding mistress introduced the new boarder to them as Mr. Triggs. The boys acknowledged the introduction with their usual politeness, but as soon as they were seated, Bob carelessly took up his fork and telegraphed to Tom:

"Queer looking old chap, this Mr. Triggs, don't you think?"

"Rather odd," replied Collingwood in the Morse alphabet.

"Where do you s'pose he came from?"

"Search me. Maybe from the West."

"Why don't you ask him? He might know something about the diggings."

"I will after a while. Here comes our soup. I hope it's better than what we had yesterday."

The boys got away with their soup in silence. Then Bob signalled again to call Tom's attention to the following:

"Mr. Triggs is putting away the roast beef as though it was as tender as spring chicken and not as tough as the product of a tannery. He must be used to such fare. I'll bet you a nickel he's from the G. W."

G. W. meant Golden West with Bob, and his reading had given him the impression that all miners subsisted on dried venison, hard tack and coffee, with an occasional dose of flapjacks and a few other things prepared after a primitive fashion. Tom didn't answer, as he was hungry, and lost no time in attacking the aforesaid roast beef, which was not quite as tough as Bob had intimated, though it was not tender by any means, for the boarding mistress never bought anything in this line but the round, because it was cheaper than the better cuts. After the new boarder had finished his meal he rose from his chair like a person afflicted with the rheumatism and limped slowly from the room. His room adjoined the one occupied by the boys, and he was so long in getting up to the third story that Tom, who left the table before Bob, caught up with him just as he struck the landing. Mr. Triggs took the key of his room out of his pocket, and in fumbling for the keyhole, he dropped it. As he stood looking helplessly at it, Tom, seeing his predicament, darted forward, picked it up, inserted it into the hole and unlocked the door.

"There you are, Mr. Triggs," he said cheerfully.

"Thank you, young man," replied the new boarder. "I've got the rheumatism bad, and it's mighty hard for me to bend my legs. Your name is Collingwood, I think?"

"Yes, sir."

"Will you come in?"

Tom hesitated.

"I expect my friend upstairs in a minute."

"Leave the door open, and when he comes call him in."

"What's the matter with you paying us a visit? Our room is larger."

"You object to smoking?" asked the old man.

"Not at all," smiled Tom.

Mr. Triggs got his pipe and tobacco pouch and accompanied Collingwood to his room. They were barely seated, and the visitor was filling his pipe-bowl, when Bob bustled in.

"Mr. Triggs invited me into his room, but I thought he'd better come in here where there's more room," explained Tom.

"That's right," answered Bob, taking a chair.

"Don't you lads smoke?" asked the old man, looking at each in turn.

"No, sir," replied Tom. "I don't think it is a good habit for boys to acquire."

"I've always smoked since I can remember, and it hasn't done me any harm," said the visitor.

"I had an idea that you might be from the West, Mr. Triggs," said Tom, hoping that his surmise was correct.

"Your idea is correct. 'I'm from Colorado,'" replied the old man, striking a match and lighting his pipe.

"Lived there some time, I suppose," ventured Tom.

"I ain't lived no place consecutive like. Been all over the West from the Missouri to the Coast, and from Rio Grande to the Klondyke."

"You must be well acquainted with the country."

"I guess I can find my way about without a guide," replied Mr. Triggs with a grim smile.

"Been to the gold diggings, haven't you?" asked Tom, eagerly.

"A few. Young man, I've spent nigh to forty years prospectin' and diggin' in the gold districts."

"Forty years!" ejaculated Tom. "I should think you'd be a Monte Cristo by this time."

"A who?"

"A Monte Cristo," repeated Tom.

"Never heard of him. Who was he?"

"He was the richest man in the world, according to the story."

"What mine did he own?"

"He didn't own any mine. He found his money on an island in the Mediterranean Sea. It was hidden in a cave and he discovered the secret."

"Hum!"

"Have you been prospecting and digging gold for forty years?" asked Tom, not able to associate such an idea with a man whose seedy appearance showed that he was not abundantly supplied with money.

"It might be nearer thirty-five," nodded their visitor.

"And haven't you made your fortune?" said Tom in a tone of astonishment.

"I've made several of them, young man."

"Several of them?"

Mr. Triggs nodded.

"Several of them, mostly, I'm sorry to say, for other people."

"Why not for yourself?"

"Because sharper men than me done me out of my rights."

"How could they? I thought when a man took a claim it was his, and all he dug out of it was his."

"That's correct. But the best part of the gold is 'way under ground and must be got at by modern methods. A man who discovers a rich claim has got to have considerable capital to make his property pay. The prospector who discovers a valuable lode is not always the person who makes the most out of it. He ought to, but he don't. He has to interest capital to develop

his claim, and the men with money see to it, as a rule, that they get the lion's share."

All this was news, and not encouraging news either, to both Tom and Bob, and had a depressing effect on their golden visions. They thought that the only equipment a miner needed was a pick, shovel, cradle and a few other things, together with a blanket, a knapsack to carry supplies, and a revolver, knife and rifle for his protection.

"Isn't gold found near the surface of the ground?" asked Tom.

"Sure it is, in new districts never worked before. Those are called placer diggin's. But the real gold ore, the rich veins and lodes, amountin' to fortunes, run in all directions at some distance below the surface, more times than not hundreds of feet down. You have to sink shafts and bore tunnels to get at it in paying quantities. This requires machinery, and machinery is expensive, especially when it has to be brought hundreds of miles out into the wilds, part of the way by railroad and part of the way on the back of mules. Then when you get your ore on the dump at the mouth of your shaft or tunnel it has to be sacked and sent to the mill to be crushed and smelted. The gold and silver and other metals, as shown in the assay of your samples, have to be separated and kept track of. Modern mining is a great business, young men, and it's growing greater every day. Great fortunes have been made out of small beginnings, are being made at this moment and will be made in the future out West. It is the greatest country in the world."

Mr. Triggs, having finished his pipe, said he felt sleepy.

"We'll continue this conversation another time, young gentlemen," he said, rising from his chair laboriously. "P'raps I can induce you to go West with me when I got the better of my rheumatism. If I can I'll make your fortunes."

With those words he bade them good-night and retired to his own room.

CHAPTER VI.—The Valley of Gold and the Path to Good Luck.

Left to themselves, Tom and Bob looked at each other like people just awakened from a pleasant dream of affluence to find themselves still facing the stern reality of common, everyday experience.

"He doesn't talk like the books we've read," said Tom, who was the first to break the silence.

"No. His conversation was all Greek to me. Mining must be carried on differently to what it was when those books were written. According to the stories it was easy to dig for gold. Every time the hero washed out a pan of dirt he found some golden specks which he put away in his pouch."

"Yes, and he found nuggets of pure gold in pockets, where the action of the water had washed the little specks until they accumulated into a lump. Nothing was said about milling or smelting it to get other stuff out of it. It was the real thing already. Say, Bob, do you think those books didn't tell the truth?"

"How can I tell? I believe things were different then, as I said before."

"Mr. Triggs said gold could be found near the surface in new places. That must be what the stories referred to. I remember now that I read of the gold diggings in California and parts of Nevada, and hundreds of miners dug gold out of the ground with pick and shovel, and washed it out in pans and cradles. I saw many pictures showing how they did it, so the books were true enough, I guess. If we go West we must hunt up a new place, and dig gold as they used to do."

"He said if we'd go West with him he'd make our fortunes. You heard that, didn't you?"

"Yes."

"How can he make our fortunes when he can't make his own after thirty-five years' trying?"

"It's a wonder he wouldn't get to be smart after being thirty-five years at the business."

"Some people are born chumps and never get smart."

"That must be the trouble with him. I don't think anybody could fool us out of a rich claim if we found one."

"I should hope not."

"I'd hang on to such a thing with both feet."

"So would I."

"We must talk with him again on the subject. I want to find out all I can before I make a start."

"That's my idea. We don't know any more about the West and mining than what we've read. It's a good thing to bump a man who's been on the ground."

"There must be thousands of people around Goldfield, and Tonopah, and Bullfrog, and other places in Nevada engaged in mining."

"I should think there was."

"I saw a list containing the names of hundreds of persons who had got rich by investing a few dollars in mining stock."

"I'd rather stake out a claim and dig gold for myself than buy stock that I didn't know anything about."

"So would I. That's what we proposed doing, isn't it?"

"That's right," nodded Bob. "But when we settled on that you didn't have any more money than me. Now you're worth all of \$6,000."

"What's \$6,000?"

"It's a lot of money. I wish I had it."

"One could make \$6,000 in a few months out of a rich claim."

"If I was sure of that I'd pack up and start West with you to-morrow."

"We'll talk over with Mr. Triggs. I guess I'll go to bed."

"What's the matter with a game of pinochle first?"

"I'll go you."

They drew up alongside a table, got out the cards and commenced the game. Before they were half through they heard some one calling.

"Listen," said Tom. "I believe that's Mr. Triggs."

It proved to be the old man's voice, and Tom went to see what he wanted. He proved to be very ill. He had a pain and a smothered feeling around the heart. Tom decided that he ought to have a doctor. He called Bob and sent him to fetch one who lived in the block. While he was

gone Tom did everything he could to relieve Mr. Triggs, and under his ministrations the old man grew better. When he was able to talk he expressed his gratitude to the boy.

"That's all right," replied Tom. "You don't suppose I'd see you suffer without trying to help you all I could?"

Then Bob appeared with the physician. He talked to the old man and examined him carefully. Then he left a prescription.

"What's the matter with him?" Tom asked the doctor on the way to the front door.

"Rheumatism. It's working up toward his heart. I've got to head it off, if I can, or it will be likely to kill him. You had better not tell him yet that he's in a dangerous state. Time enough for that if matters get worse."

The boys agreed to take turns watching the old man that night. Towards morning he grew much better, but the chances of his leaving his bed that day were remote. Tom notified the boarding mistress, and she said she would look after her boarder during the day. Several days passed and Mr. Triggs held his own, then he had another bad attack. The doctor, who had been calling daily, was summoned in a hurry, and he did what he could for the old man. Afterward he took Tom aside and told him that Mr. Triggs couldn't live long.

"Another attack will probably finish him," said the physician, "and he's certain to have it soon. Possibly inside of twenty-four hours. You had better tell him to settle his worldly affairs in anticipation of the worst."

Tom was sorry to receive this report from the doctor, and he didn't like the duty of breaking the intelligence to the sufferer. Mr. Triggs, however, made it easy for him. The old chap had a strong suspicion that his hours were numbered, so when Tom returned to his bedside he said:

"What did the doctor say to you?"

"He said you are a pretty sick man," replied the boy.

"Humph! He said I was goin' to die, didn't he?"

"He isn't sure that you'll recover."

"Look here, my lad, you've been very kind to an old chap like me who's a stranger to you. So has your friend. Somehow or another I've taken a fancy to you. I meant to persuade you to go West with me if I got well. I intended to make your fortune as well as my own. It is too late now for me to make my own. The chance has passed away from me forever. But I can point out the path to good luck to you. Listen: A short time before this disease attacked me I was prospectin' among the mountains of Colorado, far from the beaten tracks. One day I discovered a narrow path up the mountains. I followed it and it led me to the very top of the range. Here before my eyes I was startled by the sight of a gigantic rock fashioned in the perfect form of a human skull. As much as twenty years since I had heard about that peculiar rock, which pointed the way, I was told, to a basin in the range called Death Valley, probably named on account of the skull rock which seemed to guard the path leadin' down into it. It was an old Indian who told me about it, and he said the valley literally teemed with surface gold. I made half a dozen trips at various times to those mountains to try and

locate the skull rock, but never succeeded in findin' it until this, the seventh time, I struck the right path. Descendin' to the valley, which I found as the Indian had described it, I soon saw that the place gave abundant evidences of the presence of gold. The precious metal appeared to be everywhere. There were a score of outcroppin's of hidden veins and lodes, while thousands on thousands of dollars worth of gold could be washed from the surface dirt alone. I saw that I had discovered a new El Dorado that would prove to be the richest diggin's in the West. A stream of water flowed through the centre of the valley which would offer all the necessary facilities for washin' the loose surface gold. The valley was so small that when I had staked out the claims to which the law entitled me I had covered the whole place. In a word, I had practically become the owner of Death Valley. I had merely a prospector's outfit with me, and therefore could do nothin' at the moment save secure samples of the outcroppin's from different places in the valley. With these in my bag I left the valley expectin' soon to return with the necessary tools to work the surface gold over and thus secure the capital to enable me to sink a shaft for the richer metal below. It was fated that I never should realize my dream of wealth, for shortly after my return to Denver, where I duly recorded my right to possession of the valley, the papers provin' which are in my valise in yonder corner, I was taken down with rheumatism. A physician advised me to go East for change of air, and I came here, expectin' to get well of my ailment. Instead of which I am now about to die. As I haven't a relative in the wide world, I have decided to make you my heir. To make you the owner of the New Eldorado in Death Valley. Bring me pen and paper and I will draw up the paper that shall be my will."

Tom, much astonished at the remarkable turn of events, and hardly realizing the great importance to him of the document the old man was about to prepare, got the articles from his room.

"Now, my lad, go downstairs and ask the landlady and her husband to step up to witness this paper that it may be a legal document," said the old man.

Tom did so, and the parties in question presently made their appearance.

"Being satisfied that I am about to die," said Mr. Triggs to them, "I wish you to understand that this paper is my last will and testament which I have made out in favor of Tom Collingwood here, in consideration of his kindness to a friendless old man. Please sign it as witnesses."

They did so, wondering what their new boarder had to leave to the boy. After they had withdrawn Mr. Triggs asked Tom to open his valise and take out the long, yellow envelope he would find there. Collingwood found it without difficulty and handed it to the old man.

"Here are the papers establishin' my right to Death Valley," said the miner. "You see they bear the endorsement of the county clerk showin' that they have been recorded. Here on this paper are the directions to find what I have called 'The Path to Good Luck.' It's the only path that leads to the Giant's Skull and the golden valley beyond. The bearings are marked by compass, and you must provide yourself with a small one

when you start for the mountains. The range itself is west-southwest of Denver, and Death Valley is situated about the centre of what is known as the Black Triplets—three tall peaks close together that look much darker than the rest of the range. Enterin' the range through a long windin' valley you will come to the foothills of the first of the Triplets. Then you must begin to take your bearin's by compass in accordance with this paper. They will lead you directly to the 'Path to Good Luck.' As soon as you strike the top of the mountains and see the Giant's Skull on your left, all you have to do is to descend by the path and the valley of gold is before you. Do you understand?"

"I do," replied Tom, who was nevertheless rather bewildered by the strange facts presented to him.

"That is all. I feel a bit exhausted now and will try to sleep. Be careful of the papers, and see that you do not mislay the directions pointin' the way to the Giant's Skull. Without them you might search in vain for years for the 'Path to Good Luck.'"

The old man turned over on his side and closed his eyes, while Tom sat down to think out the remarkable story about the "Path to Good Luck" leading to the golden Death Valley by the way of the Giant's Skull, and to wait for Bob Preston to show up.

CHAPTER VII.—The Passing of Mr. Triggs.

Somehow or another Tom thought the circumstances of the case bore a resemblance to the romance of "The Count of Monte Cristo." It was an old white-haired man, dying from the effects of long confinement in the dungeons of the fortress d'If, that gave the hero of the story the directions to find the famous treasure hidden on the island of Monte Cristo. It was an old man dying from the rheumatism contracted in searching for the golden treasure of the earth, who had just given the key to what he claimed to be a fabulous fortune. In each instance the treasure was only to be got at by following certain directions. Edmund Dantes, in the story, became wealthy almost beyond the dreams of avarice. Was he, plain Tom Collingwood, the hero of no romance, fated to become the real Monte Cristo of actual life? It seemed too incredible to be true like the dreams of a hasheesh eater. And yet there was nothing unsubstantial about the title deeds to Death Valley, with the recorder's stamp and signature on them. He opened the yellow envelope and looked the documents in the case over carefully to assure himself that there was no fiction about them. As well as he could understand they appeared to be perfectly genuine.

"'The Path to Good Luck,'" he muttered. "The only way by which the valley of gold can be reached. It is well named. If I was superstitious I could easily find a weird connection between the Giant's Skull overlooking Death Valley and the fate of poor Mr. Triggs."

While Tom was sitting in a brown study the door of the room, which stood slightly ajar, was pushed quietly open and Bob appeared. Observing that the old man appeared to be asleep,

and not wishing to disturb him, he tiptoed over to the side of his chum.

"Tom," he whispered, "you're not asleep?"

"No," replied Collingwood, straightening up. "I was just dreaming."

"You were not asleep, but you were dreaming. That's pretty good. What were you dreaming of?" grinned Bob.

"Gold."

"Gold?"

"Yes. That I was the richest boy in the world."

"That's a pleasant kind of dream."

"Yes, especially if you wake up and find it a fact."

"You've woke up and discovered that it wasn't a fact."

"I don't know about that. I may be the richest boy in the world in a little while for all you and I know."

"You may if you go out West and find a mountain of gold."

"It's easier to dig gold out of the valley than out of a mountain."

"If it's near the surface, I suppose."

Tom got up and looked at the old man.

"He'll sleep awhile. He's breathing easily. Come in our room. I want to tell you something."

So they adjourned to the other room, leaving both doors partially open.

"Mr. Triggs has been telling me a wonderful story."

"He has?"

"Yes. The doctor says he's going to die, and the old man himself is certain of the fact."

"That's too bad," replied Bob, soberly.

"Yes, it's hard luck for him, for he has told me that he discovered a valley teeming with gold just before he was taken down with rheumatism."

"He told you that. He must be out of his head," replied Bob, incredulously.

"I don't think he is. I believe he told me the truth."

"What makes you think he did?" asked Bob, with awakened interest.

"Because I've seen the papers giving him title to the ground."

"And he said the property was full of gold?" said Bob eagerly.

"Yes. He's seen the gold with his own eyes. He has samples of it in his valise, and the assay receipt shows that the samples he submitted for analysis are very rich—several hundreds of dollars per ton."

"Gracious! And who will come in for all this wealth when he is dead?"

"Me, and incidentally yourself."

"You!" gasped Bob.

"He hasn't a relative in the world to lay claim to it. Because I've been good to him, he said, he has willed it all to me. There is the document," and Tom opened the yellow envelope, took out the paper signed by Thomas Triggs in a clear hand, and witnessed by the boarding mistress and her husband, and handed it to his chum.

Bob glanced over it in a mechanical kind of way, astonished beyond measure.

"My goodness!" he exclaimed. "If it's only true about the valley of gold you will become a millionaire."

"I hope so. And don't forget that you're coming into a good share of it yourself. The old man expects me to let you in on it, and I would do it anyway. Here are the papers showing that he owns the property beyond any doubt. Ownership is claimed under the Mineral Bearing Land Act of the government. Everything is regular down to the stamp and signature of the proper official at Denver."

Bob was quite overcome by this evidence of good luck which had come Tom's way, and, to a certain extent, his own. Tom then told him a few of the facts disclosed by Mr. Triggs, but he did not say anything about the valley being hard to find, or "The Path to Good Luck" with its wonderful natural phenomenon, the Giant's Skull. On general principles, lest the secret might in some way get out, he kept that part to himself along with the paper of directions. There was plenty of time to acquaint Bob with those important details when they got upon the ground. Tom had barely concluded what he had to say before his sharp ears heard the old man moving in his bed and he hastened into the room. He gave Mr. Triggs his medicine, and some nourishment, and then sat in the chair. Bob came in after awhile, but Tom told him to go to bed, so as to be in shape to relieve him around midnight. Tom didn't go to work next morning but remained at the house to care for the old prospector, as he considered it his duty to do now, and Mr. Triggs expressed his gratitude to the boy. The doctor came in, looked at his patient, left a new prescription and departed after telling Tom that the old man would linger along until he got another acute attack, which was liable to happen at any time. During the morning Mr. Triggs was unusually bright, and Tom told him that he thought he might fool the physician and get well after all. The old man however shook his head.

"I'm booked through," he said, with a curious smile, "without lay-off privileges. When the summons comes I must go."

Then he went on to explain matters more fully about how Tom and his friend were to proceed in relation to the golden valley after they reached the city of Denver.

"No, one can dispute the title to the valley," he said. "But as soon as the news gets out to the public there will be an immediate rush to take up claims on the surroundin' hills."

"Nobody will be able to find their way to the valley except by accident, according to your statement," replied Tom.

"At present that holds good, but as soon as you begin carryin' your gold down the mountain you will soon leave a clear trail to guide any one to the right path, and once it is spotted the secret will cease to be one. But that fact need not worry you. You must first of all gather in as much of the surface gold as you can get at yourselves in secret. Then you had better look around for honest capitalists and form a company for properly workin' the ground. The assay receipt I already have might well be backed up by other assays of fresh samples, and on the strength of these you must make the best terms you are able to with one or two experienced minin' men. You must investigate the men before you approach them on the subject. The right people will treat you white. I have been

unfortunate in my own selections. Once I turned down a good man in favor of a pair of sharpers, and thereby lost a considerable fortune. Remember you are a boy, inexperienced in mines and minin' matters, and will be regarded as a good thing to fleece if you should strike the wrong people. In any case, you can't be too careful. Insist on havin' your rights, and above all be sure when you form the company to hold on to the majority of the stock—say three-quarters. Then nothin' can be done without your sanction. Do not accept any offer to sell out your claims, no matter what the offer, until after a thorough development of the property has established its prospective value. In any case I think from my estimate of the ore likely to be found that you would be foolish to dispose of your rights even for several million. It is bound to turn in to you, and those associated with you in its development, immense dividends in the course of time. You should have a steady income from the property as long as you live. What more could a young man of your age ask?"

Tom listened eagerly to Mr. Triggs and resolved to profit by his advice. He asked many questions about the West, and received truthful answers that opened his eyes more to conditions as they were out there than any book, however well written, could have done. When Bob returned from work after five o'clock, Mr. Triggs was doing quite well under the circumstances, and neither of the lads thought he would die for several days at least. Bob stood watch from seven to midnight and then Tom relieved him. About three in the morning the old man was attacked again, and Tom sent Bob for the doctor in great haste. Tom used all the means at his disposal to rally Mr. Triggs, but his efforts were without avail. The old prospector and miner died before Bob got back with the physician. Tom told the doctor that he would see that he was paid for his services, though the physician had attended the old man without any great hopes of receiving any money, for he saw that he seemed to be poor and without friends. Collingwood hired an undertaker and had Mr. Triggs buried in a respectable way in a grave that he bought for the purpose.

He took possession of all the old man's effects, and settled with the boarding mistress what she claimed to be her due. After paying the doctor, who cut his bill in half, Tom found he had laid out altogether about \$400 on the old miner. Then he had a long talk with Bob, during which he proposed that they should proceed to Denver without delay, and there make preparations to go to the mountain range where the Black Triplets were and search for the path that led past the Giant Skull to Death Valley. Bob agreed to the proposition, so they threw up their jobs at the cutlery works, packed a couple of suit cases, and after bidding the boarding mistress and boarders good-by, took a train one morning for Denver via Chicago.

From the latter city they proceeded to Denver, which they reached in due time. Then they immediately visited the office in which Mr. Triggs had recorded his claim, showed the officer in charge the old man's will and had it filed in proper form. They then set out for Clear Creek,

which they found to be a good sized town, but full of the gambling element.

They secured a room at the Clear Creek House and spent the rest of the day looking about the town. They visited the post office, where they cashed a money order, which Tom had sent on ahead. That night they visited a dance hall where a show was going on, and ordered soft drinks. Near them sat four desperate looking men. One of them was fully six feet tall and had red hair. He was a fierce looking rascal. As a matter of fact he was a desperado who was wanted by the sheriff for murder. His name was Bill Higgins. Two deputy sheriffs were in the place to arrest him. They were disguised as miners. A nimble-footed artist was doing a song and dance turn, when the place was thrown into confusion by an action by the sheriffs. They approached and ordered Higgins to throw up his hands. Our two boy friends arose from their table just as a shot rang out and the deputy who had the drop on the desperado staggered and dropped his arm. Then Higgins whipped out a revolver and pointed it at the officer and it would have been all over with him; but Tom seized his empty glass and threw it with unerring accuracy at the ruffian's weapon. The crash of glass followed the villain's shot, but the bullet only grazed the deputy's head.

CHAPTER VIII.—Off For the Black Triplets.

The glass thrown by Tom had broken on the ruffian's hand and cut an ugly gash. The shock caused him to drop the revolver, which struck the back of his chair and bounded toward the spot where the boys stood. As Higgins turned with a snarl of rage to see from whence this fresh attack had come, Tom reached down and picked up the rascal's weapon. A score of revolvers flashed about the room. The lives of the two deputies as well as those of the intrepid Tom and the unfortunate Bob, hung in the balance, when the sheriff himself, accompanied by six armed assistants, dashed into the room prepared for business. At the same moment the red-headed villain swung around on his heel and dashed through an open doorway near at hand, followed by a bullet from the gun of the wounded deputy. Whether the ball reached him or not it failed to stop his retreat, and a subsequent search showed that he had got clear off. Tom and Bob left the place under the wing of the sheriff's party. Both the deputy whose life he had saved, and his companion, were loud in their praises of Tom's nerve and courage.

"You're a newcomer in town I can see," said the sheriff. "What's your name and where do you hail from?"

"Tom Collingwood, and I and my friend, Bob Preston, hail from New York State."

"You clearly saved my life," said Deputy Jordan. "But it was touch and go with me even at that. You can see where the rascal's ball cut a furrow along my cheek. Why, boy, you did what scarcely another man in Clear Creek would have dared to do. That's one of the most desperate scoundrels under the sun. His name is Bill Higgins, and he's known far and wide as

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a dead shot—a man who has killed Lord knows how many men, for he's quicker than greased lightning with his gun. Had your aim not been true, causing him to drop his gun, we would both have been subjects for the coroner, while my companion and your own would probably have suffered the same fate. Young man, I am proud to know you. You can count me as your friend for life. My name is Jack Jordan. Shake."

Tom and the deputy shook hands. The other deputy, whose name was Joe Howard, Sheriff Bartling and all the rest of the party grasped Collingwood's hand in turn, and declared that they were glad to make his acquaintance. Bob also shook hands all round. The boys needed no better introduction to Clear Creek. The news of Tom's remarkable act in "The Eldorado" against such a notorious villain as Bill Higgings was certain to be known all over town by morning, and he was sure to find himself an object of universal attention and interest, and rated as the nerviest lad who had ever stepped foot in Clear Creek. The sheriff and party adjourned to a big saloon to liquor, as they termed it, and the boys were carried with them in spite of their protests that they did not drink strong waters.

"Have a smoke then," said the sheriff.

"We don't smoke," replied Tom, firmly.

"Not even cigarettes?" asked Sheriff Bartling in some surprise.

"Not even cigarettes," replied Tom.

"Well, take a soda or sarsaparilla."

The boys agreed to do that. The drinks circulated, and the crowd who wanted to know whether the posse had killed Bill Higgings, for they saw the fellow was not a prisoner, presently learned of the thrilling episode at "The Eldorado." Tom Collingwood then became the focus of all eyes. Everybody wanted to shake hands with him and know who he was. They were accommodated in a general way. The news was also being circulated about all the saloons and other open resorts by eyewitnesses, and a crowd soon massed in the saloon where the sheriff and his party was. Tom and Bob found this boost into sudden popularity somewhat annoying to them. They were continually being mistaken one for the other, and for awhile Preston fancied he was as big a lion as his chum. They found it impossible to get away until the sheriff and his men made a move. Then they were escorted to the Clear Creek House, where they had to take several more sodas, and were finally loudly cheered as they were permitted to go upstairs. The proprietor of the hotel, who had learned the particulars long before they appeared, metaphorically took off his hat to Tom, and told him that he and his friend owned the house as long as they chose to remain. He easily foresaw that their presence would draw a big lot of custom to his bar during their stay, and that he would be congratulated on having such a remarkable guest as Collingwood—a boy who actually bearded the biggest desperado in Colorado in his own haunt without a gun to protect himself with.

"We're right in it, Tom," said Bob, when the boys had retired to their room. "Or rather you are, for I'm only a side issue. I never drank so many sodas in such a short time in my life, and I could have put away twice as many if I had had the capacity for them."

"Well, it is a great satisfaction to me to know that I saved a man's life to-night," replied his companion. "It is true that I didn't know I was up against the worst desperado in the State, but even had I known it I shouldn't have acted differently. When I saw him yank his gun out I felt it in my bones that he was going to kill the officer, and on the spur of the moment I did the best thing I knew how to try and prevent the tragedy."

"It was a good thing that you hit the mark fair and square. If you hadn't—you know what the deputies said."

"I'll bet I've marked him for life."

"I'm glad we're going away in a day or two. The rascal, or some of his friends, might lay for us and try to get square."

"We must carry our guns after this for protection. I think I'll use his revolver. It's heavier and more formidable than the one I bought for myself."

Tom drew out Bill Higgings's weapon and looked at it.

"It's a corker," said Bob. "I wonder how many men he's killed with it?"

"More than one, I'll wager."

The boys talked for some time over their strenuous experience in "The Eldorado."

Tom had a talk with the hotel man about the lay of the country in the direction of the Black Triplets, and was abundantly supplied with information. The proprietor asked them if they were going prospecting, and Tom intimated that they were. They decided to set out soon after dinner and put up over night at the ranch of one William Spencer, to whose hospitality they were warmly recommended by Sheriff Bartling.

Deputy Sheriff Jack Jordan, who came around to see them, gave them lots of good advice, and helped them pack their things on their horses in proper shape. He advised them to get a long, thin and tough rope for mountain climbing, as he said it was bound to come in handy.

Rifles being an unnecessary incumbrance were not considered in their makeup. Jordan said that their revolvers ought to afford them sufficient protection. They were not likely to meet with any special peril from the inhabitants of the district, unless they ran foul of Bill Higgings and some of his crowd.

"I hardly think that you'll run across that gang in the direction you're going, as the rascals have been operating chiefly between here and Denver. However, you should keep your weather eye lifting all the time, for there's no telling just where the scamps may turn up. After what you did to Higgings last night it would not be well for either of you to meet him. He can draw a gun quicker than any man in the State, and he is counted a dead shot. There is a reward of \$5,000 standing for his capture, alive or dead, and \$1,000 apiece for the regular members of his gang."

The boys thought that they would prefer not to run across the desperado, even with the chance of winning one of the rewards. A crowd gathered to see them off, and then all being in readiness they took their leave of Clear Creek and headed for the distant mountain range. They were well supplied with mining implements.

CHAPTER IX.—Tom and Bob Make a New Friend.

They were soon out of sight of town and riding among the various mines of the district. Occasionally they were recognized and warmly greeted by miners who had been in Clear Creek the night before and heard of Collingwood's performance at "The Eldorado."

Every one asked them whither they were bound, and Tom gave out the impression that they were on a prospecting tour. In the course of two hours they had passed beyond the mining district of Clear Creek and were alone on the trail leading in the direction of the Black Triplets.

"This is simply great," remarked Bob, as they rode along side by side. "I feel like a bird."

"After we have roughed it a while things will look different," replied Tom. "At present we are enjoying a new and novel experience, and even the bare plain and commonplace foothills interest us. When we return to Clear Creek I hope we will have evidences of unlimited wealth in our saddle bags."

"I shall be greatly disappointed if we do not," replied Bob.

"This is a great country, the wild and woolly West, isn't it?"

"That's what it is. When gold was first discovered in this district I guess things were pretty fierce for awhile. I'll bet there was lots of promiscuous shooting going on. In those times I've heard that every hard rooster had a private graveyard. The country is now growing civilized with the introduction of modern mining methods."

"Hello!" exclaimed Tom. "Here comes a solitary horseman from the direction of the mines."

"As long as it isn't red-headed Bill Higgings I don't care," answered Bob.

"He's evidently aiming to keep us company."

"I've no objection to his aiming at anything except a gun at us," grinned Bob. "I've no ambition to be made a target of."

The stranger came on after them at a rapid pace, and ere long they made out that he was a boy like themselves.

As they were merely jogging along at a slow pace the young horseman presently overtook them.

"Well, pardners, you're from Clear Creek, I guess?" he said, as he reined in beside Tom.

He was a well-built, curly-headed lad, with frank, handsome features, well tanned by constant exposure to the sun and open air.

Tom and Bob took an instant fancy to him.

"That's right," replied Tom. "We left there something over two hours ago."

"Are you the boys who were in 'The Eldorado' last night?" he asked with some eagerness in his tones.

"We are the chaps," replied Tom.

"I'm right glad to meet you, pards. I heard about you up in the Alpha Mine, where I just came from. Which of you is Tom Collingwood?" his eyes resting on Tom as if he suspected he was the person.

"That's my name," said Tom.

"Shake, pard. I'm proud to make your acquaintance. My name is Sam Munson."

"Glad to know you, Munson," said Tom. "This is my chum, Bob Preston."

The boys nodded at each other.

"When I heard that you fellows had been seen riding out this way I hurried on to meet you, for I wanted to know the fellow who had the nerve to stand out against Red Bill Higgings. You're a wonder, Collingwood."

"Oh, I don't know," replied Tom. "I've had so many bouquets thrown at me since last evening that it's a wonder I haven't a swelled head by this time."

"No fear of that," grinned Bob.

"You saved Jack Jordan's life with a tumbler. I hear?" said the newcomer.

"Yes, I guess I did," admitted Tom.

"They say you didn't have a gun of any kind about you at the time?"

"I didn't."

"Well, you've got a magnificent nerve," replied Munson, admiringly.

"Thanks," laughed Tom.

"How did you come to go into 'The Eldorado'? Didn't you know that it was the toughest saloon in town?"

"No. They all looked alike to Bob and me."

"That's where Bill Higgings used to hang out before the town got too hot for him. It shows you what a desperate chap he is when he had the nerve to venture back there in the boldest kind of way with a price on his head."

"I guess he's about as hard as they come."

"You boys are from the East, of course?"

"We are. From good old New York State."

"Come out here to rough it?"

"That's what we have."

"You look as if you might be going prospecting."

"We're on a gold digging aunt."

"You'll have to find your gold first," smiled Munson.

"We're looking for it now."

"Been studying mineralogy, I suppose, and have come out here to practice what you learned from your books."

"No, I can't say we've done any of that kind of studying. We've been working in a cutlery works for a matter of three years."

"Don't you know anything about the properties of mineral substances?" asked Munson in no little surprise.

"Not a thing."

"Then how do you expect to distinguish the presence of gold-bearing rock?"

"By seeing the specks of gold in it," replied Tom, rather innocently.

Munson laughed heartily at his answer.

"I'm afraid you'll only waste your time if you try to prospect on that line," he said. "A would-be prospector ought to acquire all the knowledge he can, both theoretical and practical, pertaining to the business before he starts out on an actual trip. He should learn in what rocks and under what conditions he may reasonably hope to discover certain minerals, so that he may not look for gold and silver veins in the unaltered rocks of the flat prairie. One of the best preliminary educations is actual work in the mines and mills, where one may get an idea of the ores, how they occur in nature and their relative value."

"You talk as if you knew considerable about

the matter," said Tom, regarding their new acquaintance with interest.

"I ought to. I've studied the subject on the lines I've mentioned, and I've done some practical prospecting to test my knowledge. But I came out here chiefly to rough it for my health."

"Where do you hang out?"

"At my uncle's ranch, about fifteen miles from here. I can promise you that you'll receive a hearty welcome."

"We expected to stay over night at William Spencer's ranch," said Tom.

"That's my uncle."

"I'm glad to hear it. I've a note to him from Sheriff Bartling."

"Well, the best introduction you could have is the record you put against Red Bill Higgings. The rascal has a grudge against my uncle, and has threatened to do him up some time. He tried it once some months back, but was beaten off. The man who puts Red Bill under the sod will get \$1,000 from my uncle."

Tom and Bob liked Sam Munson more and more as the three cantered along over the trail, and Sam seemed to be equally attracted to them.

"Where are you fellows bound, anyway?" asked Munson.

"We're making for the range in the neighborhood of the Black Triplets."

"The dickens you are. That's a mighty wild district. I know several prospectors who have been down that way, but they didn't find any indications of gold, and they were men of great experience. One of them stopped over night with uncle on his way back to Clear Creek some weeks ago. He was an old chap named Thomas Triggs."

"We knew him," said Tom.

"Did you? Where did you meet him? In Denver?"

"No. In Forksville, New York, the town where we were living."

"You don't say. I never thought he'd go East. He's been thirty-five years, according to his own account, in the West, Southwest and Northwest. Those sort of men scarcely care to return to civilized haunts."

"He went East because he had the rheumatism bad, and he thought he'd get better of it there. But he didn't. It went to his heart and he died."

"So he's dead, eh?"

"Yes. Now look here, Munson, I rather like you. I think you're a pretty decent kind of fellow. If I tell you why Bob and I have come out here will you keep it to yourself?"

"I will, upon my word."

"And would you like to come with us to the Black Triplets?"

"Yes, I'm willing to go with you, though I think you're bound on a wild-goose chase."

"Suppose I told you we've come all the way from New York State with the expectation of finding lots of gold in the Black Triplets?"

"Then I'd say I felt sorry for you, as you're bound to be disappointed. Did you?"

"We did. And we have a definite object in view. Did you ever hear of a place called Death Valley in yonder range?"

"I've heard my uncle speak of such a place, but though it's been hunted for by many prospectors, it's never been found. So I guess its existence is a matter of considerable doubt."

"Well, there is such a place, and it is rich with gold. It's alive with it."

"How do you know that?" asked Munson in surprise.

"Because Mr. Triggs told me all about it. He's been there, and I saw the samples of ore he brought away with him. They assayed \$600 and \$700 a ton."

"When did he tell you that?"

"Just before he died."

"When he stopped with us that night he never said a word about Death Valley. Are you sure he was in his right mind?"

"I have plenty of evidence to show that he was. He heard the story of Death Valley from an old Indian twenty years ago. Since then he made seven attempts to locate the place. He failed six times, but the seventh he was successful. That was just before you saw him at the ranch. He staked the valley out and recorded his claims at Denver. That looks like business, doesn't it?"

"It does for a fact," admitted Munson.

"Just before he died he willed the property to me and gave me full directions how to find the path leading to the valley, which must be a peculiar one since it has defied discovery so long."

"Say, pard, this yarn of yours is mighty interesting. I'll be glad to go with you to the Black Triplets if only on the chance of seeing this mysterious valley. So you saw rich gold-bearing rock that old man Triggs said came from Death Valley?"

"Bob and I saw it all right, and we've got some of the specimens in our trunk which we left at the hotel in Clear Creek."

"I'd like to see them."

"You shall see them if we don't find this valley and gather more of the same kind there. I was thinking you'd be a good one to have with us because you understand rocks and such things and we do not. We have come prepared to wash out the surface gold which Mr. Triggs said lies about all over the valley. If things turn out as we expect I intend to form a company and go right into the mining business."

"Well, if old Triggs told the truth about Death Valley, and you've succeeded to his rights, you're liable to become a rich boy. One thing will then be absolutely certain—there'll be a rush to Death Valley to capture claims, and we'll have a new mining camp down in the range. That will probably bring the railroad down through this part of the country, and it will grow. People will settle along the line of the road, and my uncle's ranch will cease to be in the wilderness."

The sun was now setting behind the mountains in the west.

Munson looked around the landscape.

"Another hour's ride will bring us to the ranch," he said, and Tom and Bob were mighty glad to hear it, for it gave them visions of a good warm meal with a bed to follow—luxuries that they didn't expect to participate in again for some time.

CHAPTER X.—Love's Young Dream.

Before the hour had quite elapsed they were riding up a wide path to the porch of a two-story, rambling sort of building, that looked to be at least twenty-five or thirty years old.

It was flanked by a number of outhouses, the whole collection looking decidedly lonesome where you couldn't see another house for miles no matter in what direction you gazed. This was the ranch of William Spencer, to whom Tom bore a letter of introduction from Sheriff Bartling, of Clear Creek. Their approach was noted by Mr. Spencer himself, who was sitting on the porch. He easily made out that his nephew Sam was one of the party, and he presumed the other two, whom he saw were boys also, were friends of Sam.

They dismounted near the porch steps and an employee of the ranch came forward and led the three animals away.

"Uncle Will," said Sam, "let me make you acquainted with Tom Collingwood (Tom bowed) and Bob Preston."

Same also bowed.

"Glad to know you, young men," said the ranchman. "Take off your knapsacks and make yourselves at home. My nephew will show you to a room presently. Dinner will be ready shortly."

Tom presented the sheriff's letter to Mr. Spencer, who opened and read it. Sheriff Bartling gave the bearer an uncommon reputation for nerve and pluck. He had written a brief account of Tom's run-in with the notorious Bill Higgings at "The Eldorado" the night before, through which the boy had saved Jack Jordan's life.

"Young man," said the ranchman, after he had read the letter, "allow me to shake your hand again. So you actually took your life in your hands to save a stranger from being shot dead by Red Bill Higgings?" He regarded his young visitor with a look of admiration. "You dared to face that scoundrel with only a tumbler for a weapon. And you came out first best at that. There must be a special providence watching over you, young man. Had you deliberately wished to commit suicide you could scarcely have taken a surer means of turning up your toes than by doing what you did. The fact that you did not become a subject for the coroner is that you had the benefit of the one chance in a thousand. I admire your pluck and self-possession in a trying ordeal, and feel proud to have you as my guest."

Mr. Spencer told Sam to take the boys to a certain room on the second floor, and grabbing up their knapsacks he led the way up a wide staircase. Their conductor showed them into a low-ceiled, spacious chamber, where they proceeded to get rid of the dust and dirt of their afternoon's ride, while Sam went to his own room to freshen himself up likewise.

When he returned Tom and Bob were ready to accompany him downstairs. The boys were now introduced to Mrs. Spencer and her daughter Jessie, a very pretty, dark-eyed young girl of sixteen years. They greeted their visitors with great cordiality, but from the way they particularly regarded Tom it was easy to see that the ranchman had communicated to them the contents of the sheriff's letter.

The name of Red Bill Higgings was a bugbear at the Spencer ranch, and therefore Collingwood's gallant action at "The Eldorado" was all the more appreciated by the family. Dinner was presently announced and the visitors were shown into the dining-room.

Tom was accorded the position of honor next to the host at the head of the table, with the daughter of the house beside him, while Bob and Sam sat on the other side. The boys thought the meal an uncommonly good one, and several degrees better than what the Clear Creek hotel had furnished. Tom was quite taken with Miss Jessie, who was a bright and vivacious girl, and the young lady seemed to be equally attracted to the good-looking boy. After the meal all adjourned to the porch, which was now bathed in the light of the rising moon. Tom stated in a general way the object of their journey in that direction.

"The range thereabouts has been pretty well prospected," Mr. Spencer said, "without any important results. I am afraid you are only wasting your time."

"Well, sir, we can afford the time. If we don't find gold we'll find experience. A few weeks' roughing it among the mountains will probably do us good. I suppose you have no objections to your nephew accompanying us on this trip. He is willing to do so, and we should like to have him along for company," said Tom.

"No objection at all," replied the ranchman. "Sam has carte blanche to go anywhere he pleases whenever he pleases. We don't hold him in check by any set of rules or regulations, for we know he is a boy to be trusted."

So the matter of Sam's going with them was settled. Mr. Spencer would not hear of the boys taking their departure for several days. Ordinarily Tom would have preferred resuming his trip to the Black Triplets, but the bright eyes and engaging ways of Jessie Spencer had their effect upon him, and he was quite content to remain a while at the ranch and ramble about in her company while Bob and Sam amused themselves together. Tom's reputation for courage and coolness in an emergency was greatly enhanced at the ranch when Bob described how he had saved the night express on the Midland Central Railroad by signalling the engineer from the center of the steel girder bridge, and then leaping down between the girders to save himself from being crushed to death by the oncoming locomotive.

"So you came all the way from the East to hunt gold in the mountains of Colorado?" said Jessie to Tom, as she was walking with him not far from the house on the second day of his visit.

"Yes," nodded the boy. "And I expect to find it, too, somewhere in the neighborhood of the Black Triplets."

"Father is afraid that you'll be disappointed."

"If we are able to find Death Valley I don't think we'll be disappointed."

"But father doesn't think there is any such place."

"He admits that he heard of it often when he first came to live on this ranch," replied Tom.

"Every prospector who has been down this way has looked for the valley, but none ever found it."

"That's where you're wrong. One prospector did find it."

"We never heard the fact mentioned. Nearly all the prospectors dropped in on us both to and from the range, and if one of them had found the valley I think he certainly would have mentioned it for he would have considered it as

quite a feather in his cap, whether there were indications of gold there or not."

"The man who accidentally discovered the only path that leads to the valley called here on his return to Denver, but kept the secret to himself. He was an old fellow named Thomas Triggs."

"I remember him well," she replied. "It is not so long ago that he was here."

"Well, you'll never see him again. He is dead."

"Is it possible?"

"Yes. Before he died he confided the secret of Death Valley to me, and willed me his claim in the place. He assured me that there was enough gold there to make me wealthy. So Bob Preston and I have come to this State to verify his discovery and take possession of his property if it shows promising results. We've persuaded your cousin Sam to accompany us, and if the valley pans out he shall have a share in the good thing."

"I should dearly love to go along, too," she said, with sparkling eyes, "but of course I can't, for I'm only a girl. How I wish I was a boy!"

"I'm glad you're not a boy. I shouldn't like you half so well if you were."

Jessie blushed vividly and looked down at the ground.

"I'm afraid when I start for the range with the boys I'll leave something behind me here on the ranch," went on Tom after a pause. "Can't you guess what it is?" he added in a low tone.

She did not dare ask what he meant, for there was something in his tone and manner that gave her a strong suspicion of the truth and her heart began to flutter strangely. Both were conscious of the fact that when they came to part a few days later a void would be left which had not existed before they met each other.

"Before I met you, Jessie," breathed Tom, "I did not know what it was to care for any girl, though I've met lots of them. I don't know whether you care anything for me or not, but I do know that you have become all the world to me. I know that when I leave you all the pleasure I had counted on in this trip to the range will disappear. I will be only able to think of the little girl I left behind on this ranch. Now I want to know if you will miss me even a little bit."

They came to a pause in an open space in the wood and Tom looked earnestly down at the sweet face that was turned away from him. Although she did not indicate by words that she would miss him in the least, there was something in her manner that encouraged him and he slipped his arm around her slim waist. She made no move to draw away from him and this emboldened him to proceed:

"Aren't you going to answer me, Jessie?" he asked in a tone that fell thrillingly on her ears. "Perhaps I have offended you."

"No, no," she said, half turning toward him in evident confusion.

"Then tell me—do you or do you not care for me?"

Then he lifted her face, hot with blushes, with one hand, and gazed into her averted eyes.

"Is it yes or—no?" he asked earnestly.

For a moment she was silent and then as he pressed her still closer she said in a tremulous and

ble tone, "Yes," and buried her face on his shoulder.

"You do care for me," he exclaimed joyfully. "With all your heart as I care for you?"

"Yes," she replied.

He bent his head and gently raising hers, kissed her on the lips.

But at that moment love's young dream was rudely intruded upon by a hoarse, jeering guffaw behind them, whose jarring note speedily awoke them to the realization that not only they no longer were alone, but there was danger in the air.

Jessie released herself with a stifled exclamation. As they turned around to see who the intruder was they were confronted by the leering, wicked countenance and stalwart form of Red Bill Higgings, whose treacherous eyes glowered upon them with a sarcastic, triumphant expression.

CHAPTER XI.—In the Mountain Cave.

"A pretty pair of turtle doves, upon my word," he said sardonically. "It's almost a pity to have trapped 'em. So, young feller, you and me meet again, eh? Do you see that hand?" he went on menacingly, raising his bandaged right fist. "That is your work. Besides, I was almost caught on your account. Well, them that butts in must pay the piper. Grab 'em boys. This here is Spencer's darter, and we'll make him pay a stiff price to get her back. As for the boy, I'll attend to him when we reach the range."

A pair of villainous looking rascals appeared from among the trees and advanced to do their leader's bidding. Jessie uttered a terrified scream, and Tom pulled his revolver to defend her. Higgings, however, had his gun out so quick that it took the boy's breath away. Shoving the muzzle into Tom's face, he cried:

"Drop your gpn, or I'll blow the roof off your head!"

Tom had cocked his weapon, but that was as far as he had got. He saw he had no show at all, but if the act cost him his life he determined to second Jessie's cry by a pistol shot that he hoped would call attention to the spot. So he pulled the trigger. The revolver went off and the bullet went into the ground. Then he dropped the weapon. The ruffian did not suspect his object, but supposed he had discharged his revolver from fright. So he simply lifted his left hand and struck Tom a stunning blow in the head which felled him unconscious to the ground.

"Quick! Gag the girl with a handkerchief and carry her to our horses," he said vehemently.

Then he stooped, lifted Tom and threw him across his shoulder, thus displaying great strength. In a few moments they were unhitching their animals and preparing to retreat.

"Take the boy, Norris," he said to one of the men. "I'll carry the girl myself."

He sprang on his horse, took the struggling Jessie from the man holding her, and spurred off at full speed in the direction of the range. Jessie's scream and the pistol shot alarmed Mr. Spencer, who happened to be riding along the edge of the wood a short distance away. Fearing some trouble threatened his only child he dashed toward

the wood just in time to see Red Bill Higgings riding away from it with Jessie in his arms, followed in a moment by his two rascally followers. The ranchman recognized the abductors with a groan of anguish. He knew it was useless for him to follow them alone. So noting the direction they were taking he turned his horse back toward the ranch house, firing his revolver as he went. This raised a general alarm and half a dozen of his men came running up. Bob and Sam were not present, as they had gone fishing some miles away. Mr. Spencer hurriedly explained the situation to his men, and told them to get their rifles and their horses and follow him. While they were preparing for the chase the ranchman rushed into the house, got his own rifle and cartridge belt, and without a word to his excited wife, rejoined his followers. The ruffians were well mounted on stout mustangs, and they set a hot pace for the pursuers, whom they led by nearly three miles. After an hour's chase it seemed to be certain, unless some accident happened to the villains, that they would surely reach the fastnesses of the mountains in time to hide somewhere. It was dark when Tom came to his senses and found himself lying on the rocky floor of a cave in the mountainside. Two yards away a fire was burning hidden behind a big boulder. Bill Higgings, looking fiercer than ever in the fitful glow of the flames, was seated with his back against the rocky wall, smoking a pipe and talking to one of the men, while the other one was employed cooking something over the fire.

"You must have hit the boy a good clout, for he shows no signs of coming to," Tom heard the villain's associate remark.

"That's what I meant to do to keep him quiet till we got out here. He'll come around by the time the moon is up," replied Higgings, with a wicked laugh, "then I'll take him down the stream, blow his brains out and shuck him into the water."

"Better wait till mornin'," said the other. "The shot might attract the attention of the ranch crowd who are lookin' for us."

"They're not around here. I saw them go in the other direction. They're miles away beating up the bushes somewhere around the Black Triplets."

"I wouldn't take no chances unless you're sure. Our skins is more valuable than the death of that kid. If I was you I'd tie him hand and foot and leave him in the inner cave where the girl is now to starve. You'd get a heap more satisfaction out of that, at least I would if I was doin' the thing. What's a ball in the head? He'd never know what struck him. Starvin' is different. He'll suffer for days and die little by little. That's the way to get the good out of revenge."

"I don't know but you're right, Norris. I'll think it over."

At that moment the other man announced that the meal was ready.

"Then dish it out, Walker. Leave enough in the pot for the gal. We've got to look out for her, as she's worth several thousands to us," said Higgings.

They lost very little in disposing of it, then one of the tin pannikins was filled with what remained in the pot, and Higgings taking it in his hand, walked away into the back of the cave, disappearing around a ledge of rock. Tom could

hear him talking to some one in there, and he knew that some one was Jessie Spencer. After a time he returned and stopped in front of Tom, who as soon as he saw him coming pretended to be still unconscious. After one sharp glance at Collingwood he returned to the vicinity of the dying fire where he began to talk with Norris. Walker, who seemed to be regarded more or less as a helper, heated a pan of water over the glowing embers and washed out the pannikins and the iron pot. When he had finished his work he sat down near the others, got out his pipe and his flash of liquor, and joined in the conversation.

"Look here, pard, I've just thought of a rare scheme," said Higgings, knocking the ashes from the pipe and refilling it. "Spencer and his men will not go home till they've exhausted every possible chance of findin' the gal. Now don't you see, my laddybucks, that leaves the ranch with hardly a defender. Probably one man and the two young chaps are all that's there now. My idea is for us three to ride over there, take the people by surprise, know 'em on the head to keep 'em quiet, plunder the place and then set fire to it. We'll gain a lot of valuables, and I'll have a full revenge on Bill Spencer for past favors. The light of the burnin' ranch is likely to bring the crowd that's after us back to the property. We'll swing around and return here along the foothills. Then after I dispose of the boy we'll take the gal with us and go south to some safe place from which I kin make terms for the gal's return. How does this strike you?"

"First rate," exclaimed Norris. "I vote we carry it out."

Walker also signified his willingness to fall into the plan.

"Then that's settled. The sooner we start the better, for it won't be no darker than it is now. Get a piece of rope, Norris, and tie the boy so he can't get away when he comes to his senses. I'll fix the gal so she'll be safe enough here. Then we'll move on for the ranch."

Bill Higgings and his men got on their feet, and Norris getting the rope, came over to Tom. He shook the boy roughly, but Tom acted like a dead one, and satisfied that their prisoner was still out of his senses, he proceeded to bind his legs together. Then Norris turned Collingwood over on his face and tied his arms just above his wrists. As he worked in the dark, and Tom artfully held his wrists in such a way that reversing them would cause a certain amount of slack in the rope, the job was, on the whole, rather a bungling one. While Norris was engaged with Tom Higgings went into the inner part of the cave and secured Jessie. Collingwood was then carried into a snug place behind the rock where the fire had been burning but was now reduced to smoldering ashes, and left there. Satisfied that they would find their prisoners on their return just as they were leaving them, the rascals left the cave, mounted their horses and rode off toward the ranch, six miles away.

CHAPTER XII.—The End of Red Bill Higgings.

Tom didn't waste a moment after the scoundrels had departed in making a strong effort to

free himself. As he felt that his life ultimately depended on his success, he worked away with feverish eagerness. His ruse at the time Norris was tying him, as well as the smallness of his hands, worked in his favor, and inside of a quarter of an hour he had worked one hand out of limbo and it was easy to release the other. The jack-knife he always carried was in his pocket, the rascals not having searched him, and five minutes sufficed to free him wholly of his bonds.

Then he stood up with a sigh of satisfaction.

"Now to release Jessie; but without horses I don't see how we can return to the ranch in time to outwit Higgins and his men. Let us hope Bob, Sam and whoever else may be there, will be able to hold them off. I fear, however, that the rascals may succeed in surprising them, and then the worst is likely to happen."

He had his matchesafe in his clothes and he struck a lucifer as soon as he had felt his way around the corner of the ledge. As the light flared up he saw the huddled-up form of Jessie close by, gagged and tightly bound. Her eyes lit up with surprise and joy when she recognized Tom coming to her. But she could not utter a word on account of the handkerchief which Higgins had bound tightly across her mouth. Tom, however, quickly released her from the handkerchief, and she could only exclaim, "Oh, Tom!" when she fainted. He cut her bonds, and taking her in his arms, carried her out of the cave. Perceiving a running mountain stream near by, Tom bore her to its banks, and dashed the clear, cold water in her face until he succeeded in restoring her to consciousness. Then he asked her what had happened after he was struck down in the woods by the red-headed scoundrel. She told him how they had been carried across the plain to the range, followed by half a dozen horsemen from the ranch, one of whom she believed to be her father. Then Jessie wanted to know how Tom had managed to escape.

"I will tell you as we go along, Jessie. We must not stay here, though the villains are a mile or two away by this time on their way, I am sorry to say, to attack, rob and burn the ranch, which they believe to be unprotected at the present time."

Jessie was greatly distressed to learn that news on her mother's account, knowing that she would be exposed to probable indignities in case the ruffians were successful in achieving their object. Tom reassured her as well as he could.

"The main issue with us now is to make sure of our escape. The ranch is six miles away and we can do nothing to save it. If we could meet your father and his men, matters could be arranged differently."

The words were hardly out of his mouth before they almost ran into the arms of two of Mr. Spencer's cowboys. They did not recognize the men in the gloom, and their first impression was that they had unexpectedly run foul of their enemies. Jessie uttered a scream of fear and fell back with Tom, but the identity of the men was at once established when one of them cried, in a tone of satisfaction:

"Hello! If this isn't Jessie and Collingwood I'm a liar!"

"Will Anson, is that you?" gasped the girl, recognizing the man's voice.

"It's me, all right, miss," replied the cowboy.

"How did you escape from those desperadoes?"

"Where is my father?" asked Jessie, without answering his question.

"He's somewhere around in the neighborhood. We're out lookin' for you in small parties. I'll have them all here in no time."

He drew his revolver and fired three shots in the air. Three answering shots were fired a short distance away, and other reports followed further away. Almost directly two more cowboys came up, and the party started to walk in the direction indicated by Anson. In five minutes they were joined by the ranchman and a fifth cowboy. The seventh member of the party was watching the horses some distance away. The meeting between father and daughter was a joyful one. Explanations ensued and Mr. Spencer learned that his daughter's safety was due to Tom Collingwood.

"You've conferred a lasting obligation on me, Collingwood," said the grateful father. "Be sure I shall not forget what I owe you."

"All right, Mr. Spencer. I did the best I could for her, and am glad I was able to rescue her. But we have no time to stand here and talk. Your ranch is in danger from those rascals. They've ridden over to attack and destroy it while you and your men are here searching for us. You'd better lose no time in returning. I'll tell you how I learned this afterward."

Reaching the horses, Mr. Spencer took his daughter in front of him on his own horse, while Anson gave Tom a lift on his animal, and in few minutes the entire party was riding at full speed for the ranch. When within a mile of the place they heard two rifle shots and saw the flashes of the same from the windows of the house. This urged them on to an extra spurt of speed, and they soon observed flashes from behind one of the outhouses, which showed that the rascals were firing at the defenders of the building, who it appeared had not been taken by surprise, much to the ranchman's satisfaction. The moon coming out at that moment, the villains caught sight of the approaching horsemen, and not being strong enough to contend against reinforcements, they sprang on their horses and tried to escape to the hills. Tom sprang off Anson's horse so as not to incommode him, and the six cowboys speeded after the retreating rascals. Possessing a great advantage in their rifles, the cowboys brought down the villains one by one by firing at their mustangs and unhorsing them. When they surrounded Red Bill Higgins he put up a desperate fight, for he knew his life was forfeited anyhow. He wounded three of the cowboys, one of them badly, before he was mortally shot himself, hit by a rifle ball. The cowboys surrounded him, and though they saw he was sure to die, they put a lariat around his neck and hanged him in short order to a convenient tree, where they left him swinging in the night air. The other two rascals they secured and carried to the ranch, whence they were next day removed to Clear Springs and turned over to Sheriff Bartling. In the meantime Tom Collingwood became the hero of the ranch, and no one there could do too much for him during the next three days before he, Bob and Sam Anson set out for the Black Triplets.

CHAPTER XIII.—The Giant Skull.

During the first two or three hours of the journey Tom looked down in the mouth. It was something of a trial for him to tear himself away from the fascinating influence exercised over him by Jessie Spencer. The girl herself was similarly affected, for she had learned to love the manly-looking boy with all the strength of a first attachment. Bob and Sam understood Tom's feelings, for they had not been blind to his evident preference for Jessie's society during his stay at the ranch. They stopped for dinner among the foothills, within sight of the three dark-colored mountain peaks, and they reached the long narrow valley which circled around the base of two of the Triplets shortly after sundown. Here they established their camp for the night, picketing their horses and starting a fire. Sam Munson volunteered to act as cook and his services were accepted. He soon prepared a pot of coffee and fried a mess of bacon and eggs, which with the fresh bread and butter they had brought with them from the ranch, made a first-rate al fresco meal. They were up with the sun and Sam prepared the breakfast in good shape, after which Tom got out his compass and paper of directions.

"I must find a certain black stone," he said. "That's where I start from. So keep your eyes skinned for such a thing."

They proceeded slowly up the valley, watching out for the stone in question.

At length Sam caught sight of a tall, dark-colored stone jutting out of the ground near the base of Triple No. 1, as they called it.

"There's your black stone," said Sam. "If it isn't exactly black it's next door to it at any rate."

"I guess that must be it," said Tom, putting the compass down on the southwest side of it. "At any rate if it isn't the right one I'll soon know."

He marked off fifty-six paces to the southwest, looked at the compass and then faced east-southeast. The directions stated that he should then be in a position to bring the Triplets into the form of an exact triangle. When he faced the three peaks he found them in that position.

"Everything is O. K. so far," he said, in a tone of satisfaction. "Now we must picket our horses. All we'll take with us is a pick, shovel, a pan for washing the gold, our knapsacks and cooking utensils. I'll strap the pick on my back. You'd better carry the shovel, Bob. The pans and other things I'll assign to you, Sam. After we discover the path to Death Valley, and get the hang of the way to it, we can come back here and carry back with us the rest of our supplies and other things."

Tom then noticed that Mr. Triggs had marked the spot with a small pile of stones. He decided to make the pile more prominent, so there should be no danger of mistaking it in case they needed the landmark again. While he was thus employed, Bob and Sam picketed the animals and brought forward the articles they were to carry up the mountainside. Tom called for the long thin rope, which he threw over his arm. As an extra precaution Sam strapped his rifle on his back, and thus prepared, they started their ascent, following an exact course by compass. After a while they struck a dense thicket, through which Tom led the way. After half an hour's climbing

the way grew so rugged that Tom thought it advisable to use the rope tied around their waists equal distances apart, so as to help one another over the difficult places. They soon found it of great assistance.

"If this is the only way to the golden valley," said Bob, "we're going to have a whole lot of trouble getting to and fro, and carrying such a heavy height as gold."

"A little engineering will make the road much easier."

"You don't call this a road, do you?" asked Bob, with a grimace.

"No. There is no path till we strike the Giant Skull, then the 'Path to Good Luck,' as the old man called it, leads straight down to Death Valley. If there was a path all the way up here the valley would no doubt have been easily found long ago."

The higher they went the harder the way became and the more wild and sterile became the face of the mountains. The reason why a prospector did not persevere in this vicinity was clear to the experienced eye of Sam Munson. There was an utter absence of "float," that is, vein matter which has become detached from the "mother-lode" by natural agencies. These fragments roll downhill, or are carried by water and snowslides, sometimes great distances from the original ledge.

Some of this "float" may be barren quartz or other vein rock, while some may be more or less mineralized. Commonly, "float" is a rusty, spongy mass of rock, stained red or green from the oxidation of the iron or copper sulphides it originally contained. It was apparent to Sam that Mr. Triggs did not come up here because he expected to find gold on the mountain, but because he was searching for an entrance to Death Valley, where he believed gold was to be found if anywhere in the Triplets. At length the boys came to a deep fissure in the mountainside, along one side of which ran a narrow footpath. With Bob in the lead now they ascended this, and gradually approached the highest point of Triplet No. 1. Suddenly Bob was arrested by a tug at the rope.

"See!" cried Tom Collingwood, pointing across the fissure. "The Giant Skull!"

"My gracious!" exclaimed Bob. "So it is."

Sam, lower down, gave a startled gasp. The three boys gazed awesomely at the curious rocky formation staring them in the face.

"The Giant Skull," repeated Tom, his blood leaping with excitement. "The old man's story is clearly true. 'The Path to Good Luck' lies before us, and at its foot is Death Valley—the New Eldorado—the Valley of Gold."

CHAPTER XIV.—The Valley of Gold.

They were now exceedingly anxious to press on to the valley that apparently lay snugly tucked in between the three dark-colored mountain peaks. A few yards further on, after rounding the ledge, they came on a well-defined path leading downward.

"Hurrah!" shouted Bob. "Here's the 'Path of Good Luck.'"

They followed it without difficulty, and in half an hour stood in the long-sought-for Death Valley. Almost the first thing Sam noticed on the

trunk of a tree which stood on the bank of the narrow and swiftly-flowing mountain stream which passed along one side of the valley was the following notice:

"DEATH VALLEY LODGE."

"The Death Valley Lode, discovered by Thomas Triggs, May 27, 189—. Claim 750 feet northerly and 750 feet southerly from discovery.

"THOMAS TRIGGS."

Mr. Triggs had staked the claim out in due form by monuments of stone. There were seven of these altogether, one being near the center of the claim, close to the discovery shaft which the old prospector had with great labor succeeded in sinking to the requisite depth and width as required by law. Sam saw that Mr. Triggs had left nothing undone to establish his legal right to the claim, and he so notified Tom. Tom and Bob found Sam's services invaluable. Although the small valley, which had clearly once been the bed of a considerable-sized mountain torrent, was alive with surface gold in fine particles, left there during ages by the flow of the original stream from up the range, the two boys could scarcely detect any of the wealth that lay around them.

"You see," said Sam, "this narrow depression, which of course is really not a valley at all, is so hemmed in by the Black Triplets that the golden particles brought down the mountain and swept into this place have lodged here. It is really a remarkable circumstance to find a species of placer deposit in connection with a lode claim. After dinner I will examine the lode as uncovered by Mr. Triggs, and I have no doubt but I will find that it is fully as rich as his samples indicated. While we are here we will investigate this claim more thoroughly. If I find that the veins or the lode, or both, appear to extend under Triplet No. 3, as I should fancy they do, Bob and I can stake out claims for ourselves and reap the benefit that would accrue to others who came here later and prospected beyond your property rights. You are entitled to all veins apexing within the boundaries of your claim, and may work such veins on their dip to their full length for the distance between the parallel vertical planes of the end lines. Under no condition can you follow the vein outside of those points. If we find that the vein in its dip turns and crosses the end plane, Bob and I will stake out the ground that you have no right to and will participate in Mr. Triggs's discovery on our own account the same as any stranger would have the right to do."

"All right," said Tom, "that will suit me. I should be glad to have you both own separate claims, as it will mean more profit to the three of us combined."

A number of pans full of surface dirt was washed out, first by Sam to show Tom and Bob how to do it properly. The two Forksville boys soon saw that the manipulation of the pan, while quite simple, required considerable practice before one could become expert. Sam filled the pan about half full of water from the stream, and then threw into it a shovelful of dirt, after first picking out the larger pebbles. He worked the whole mass thoroughly with his fingers till all the clay was reduced to a fine sand and mud. Then he carefully poured off the muddy water and refilled the pan with clear water.

"That's simple enough," remarked Bob. "Any fool could do that."

"Now watch me," said Sam.

He took the pan in both hands, one on either side, and inclining it slightly away from him, gave it a peculiar circular motion. At each revolution of the pan a portion of the water slopped over the depressed edge of the pan, carrying with it some of the sand and lighter minerals, the gold owing to its greater specific gravity, remaining at the bottom. He continued to do this until only a small quantity of sand was left, in which they all saw the specks of gold shining. Sam then poured nearly all the water off, and moving the pan to and fro, the gold gradually collected by itself, when a final tilt and jerk of the pan disposed of the sand, leaving the gold in an orange-yellow streak. Tom and Bob then tried the process and succeeded very well after several trials.

They camped for the night on the claim, and next morning made their way back to the valley outside and brought back with them the rest of their supplies and traps, including a small tent provided by Sam. They remained two weeks in the little valley washing gold, and by that time had collected a considerable quantity of the precious metal. A number of good-sized nuggets were found, too. They then returned to the ranch for fresh supplies, and astonished Mr. Spencer with the news of their discovery of Mr. Triggs's valuable claim, now Tom's property. When they went back to Death Valley the ranchman accompanied them. Tom decided that the matter should be kept a profound secret until they had washed up a sufficient quantity of gold to give him a good working capital to mine the claim in the latest manner. Sam and Bob staked off a claim apiece, one on Triplet No. 2 and one on Triplet No. 3. Three months later the other claims were recorded with the recorder of the county, and then the news of the discovery of gold in the heart of the Black Triplets was circulated far and wide. Mr. Spencer helped Tom form the "Death Valley Gold Mining Company," the company taking in the four claims on a basis of sixty per cent. stock for Collingswood, and forty per cent. divided between Bob, Sam and the ranchman. A portion of the stock was sold at a good figure for development purposes, and before long a modern mining plant was in full operation on the Triggs claim.

Within a year sacks of gold ore were being sent to Clear Creek for shipment. The value of the output soon gave the mine a great reputation, and no one was surprised at the high dividends declared when the company was in full blast.

Very little of the "Death Valley Mining Co." stock could be bought, though it was occasionally quoted on the exchanges at 40 a share, which was double the price asked for shares of some of the crack Goldfield and Tonopah producers.

To-day Tom Collingswood is a rich young man, while Bob Preston and Sam Munson are on the road to large fortunes.

Mr. Spencer is also gathering in fat dividends on his share of the stock, all of which will eventually return Tom's way through Jessie Spencer, who is now the happy and petted wife of the Boy Miner of Death Valley.

Next week's issue will contain "MART MORTON'S MONEY; or, A CORNER IN WALL STREET."

GUS AND THE GUIDE

— Or. —

Three Weeks Lost in the Rockies

By GASTON GARNE

(A Serial Story.)

CHAPTER XXIII.—(Continued)

"What do you mean by that, Tom Treadway?" demanded the colonel. "Would you shoot us down in cold blood?"

"I would," was the savage reply. "But the rest of the boys have a say in the business. We will talk it over. Meanwhile, stand where ye be. The first one that moves dies."

The confab continued for some time.

Meanwhile one of the band stood guard at the top of the movable incline.

At last Gopher Tom came forward and said:

"The boys think, colonel, that we had better go slow. Jack Wicks here thinks that boy is not so much of an idiot as he seems to be; that he is only playing on us; and that he knows Dr. Blake's secrets. For the present we have decided to let you live."

"Oh, indeed. That's very kind of you," retorted the colonel. "If I may be permitted to make a few remarks in this matter, when I first struck Frisco in '49, I——"

"Cut it short," broke in Gopher Tom. "This is no time for story-telling. All hands follow me."

His manner was so threatening that Colonel Tolkins attempted no further speech.

The prisoners were now led through the spruce grove to the hut, which Gus and the guide had vainly endeavored to locate on that stormy night.

Apparently it was deserted. Gus and his companions were ordered inside, and the door was closed upon them and a key turned in the lock.

"There you can stay until we get through with the sheriff!" called Gopher Tom. "Remember there is a guard outside, and the first person who attempts to leave this place will be instantly killed."

Three of the six Gophers had followed Tom Treadway, and the sound of their retreating footsteps could now be heard.

"This is my finish," declared Silas, and he dropped exhausted to the floor.

Colonel Tolkins began swearing, when all at once the sharp report of rifles was heard outside, mingled with loud shouts.

"The sheriff has come, surest thing!" cried Gus.

"That's what!" echoed the colonel. "I've a good mind to make a break and give myself up in case those fellows are licked."

"It's the only thing to do," said Gus. "I would like to see you escape, if you could, but——"

"But he can!" broke in a voice from the loft overhead. "I can save you all!"

Crack! Crack! Crack!

The rifles seemed to be doing a big business.

Of course, everybody looked up to see from where the noise came.

There was Belle Gibbons looking down at them from the trap-door.

"Belle!" cried Gus.

"Yes, I am here," replied the girl. "I can save you from the Gophers and from the sheriff, too. Promise that you will help me get East, where I have friends among my mother's people, and I will do it. I have had enough of this life, and I want to cut it out forever."

"You can have my promise," said Gus.

"Say, Belle, I'll pay your fare and give you fifty dollars to boot!" echoed the colonel.

"I'm coming down," said Belle. "I'm going to do it. The Gophers don't know I am here, and——"

"Here comes the sheriff and his posse!" cried Gus. "They must have wiped out the Gophers. I see them coming among the trees. I think, after all, we had better give up."

"Never!" exclaimed the colonel. "You don't know Mike Oliver, or you wouldn't say so. He won't believe a word we tell him. He'll trump up a pack of lies against us. He'll swear he caught us with the Gophers, and railroad us to the penitentiary, surest thing. That man is the worst enemy I have in the world."

"What he says is true, Gus," said Belle, jumping off the loft ladder. "Trust me, and I will guide you safely out of this, and no one will ever know how it was done."

"Fire, boys!" shouted a hoarse voice outside. "Shoot right through the windows. There's a good many more of them in the hut. Cut 'em down! Kill 'em all. What we want to do is to wipe the gang clean off the earth."

A crash of glass followed, and shot after shot came whizzing into the hut.

"It's no time for talk!" gasped Gus. "Belle, it is up to you to help us if you can."

CHAPTER XXIV.

Conclusion.

"Drop on the floor! Down flat!" cried Belle, the instant the firing began.

Silas was already down, and lay there groaning. Colonel Tolkins threw himself flat, but Matt Marston did not move nor obey Gus' order.

Crouching low, Gus pulled him violently by the hand, and the boy fell, striking his head heavily.

He gave a cry of pain, and started to rise, but Gus held him down.

Meanwhile Belle crawled to a corner and pulled open a little door in the partition.

Gus could see a sort of handle set in the wall.

This the girl caught and pulled sharply, and as she did so the floor began to slowly sink.

"Down we go!" cried Belle. "They may shoot us, but they can't stop us."

As she spoke the shots were rattling overhead.

Gus, who lay on his back looking up saw the door burst open.

Several faces peered down at them, but the movable floor was already passing into darkness.

"What the deuce does all this mean?" the sheriff's hoarse voice shouted, and then three or four shots were fired down the shaft.

Luckily, none of them hit those who lay crouching upon the floor.

"Where am I? What is all this?" spoke up a strange voice in Gus' ear.

It was Matt Marston.

Probably it was the blow on the head which did it.

Speech had returned to the unfortunate boy, but Gus presently made the discovery that his memory of all that had happened to him since he left his father's house was gone forever, while concerning his past history and everything else he was perfectly clear.

"We are safe now!" cried Belle, as the shots ceased to come. "Every one can stand up if they like."

"What works this thing?" demanded Colonel Tolkins.

"It is just a common weight elevator," was the reply. "I'm not mechanic enough to explain its workings exactly. It was built by the old mining company which used to operate in Fire-Hole Canyon."

"Where will it land us?" asked Gus, and Belle informed him that the end of their downward journey would probably be the cave where Dr. Blake's secret laboratory was concealed.

"It is lucky for you that you came as you did," she went on to say. "I pulled away from the Gophers just after the fight, and I have been ready to pull out. A few things belong to me were up there in the hut, and I went up there to get them, never expecting to strike any of the gang, and when I found they were hanging around there I waited a bit so as to find out what they were driving at. That was the time you came."

"How are we going to get out of Fire-Hole Canyon?" asked Colonel Tolkins.

"I have horses," replied Belle. "There were a lot of them flying around after the fight, and I caught six and ran them into the cave. There I found out what had happened to George Brandt and Dr. Blake. The boy was gone. I thought he must have wandered away in the cave. I want to know all about it. Tell me, Matt, what happened down there?"

"I don't know. I don't know you. I don't know anything. I can't understand where I am, or what's the matter with me," replied Matt, clinging to Gus.

"Don't know me," cried Belle. "Why, you and I were always friends."

"Don't bother him, Belle," said Gus. "I'll tell you all about it when we get down. Ah! Here we are now!"

The floor, which was moved by means of ordinary cables, had touched the bottom of the cave.

Gus discovered that they were close to the entrance which he had tried so hard to find.

Explanations with Belle now followed which need not be given here.

In the laboratory the dead bodies of the two still lay.

Gus visited the place and picked up such papers and memorandum books as they could find.

Plenty of provisions were to be had in another apartment, to which Belle led them, and Silas' hunger was at last appeased. Gus had his share, too, for he was hungry enough himself, and Matt also seemed to enjoy the meal.

Meanwhile Belle and the colonel got the horses ready, and after an hour's wait no attempt had been made by the sheriff's people to pull up the elevator.

By this time Gus discovered how the case stood with Matt Marston.

The unfortunate boy was, as to his mind, like one recovering from a long fit of sickness.

Gus explained to him that he was a friend of his father and that he was going to take him home.

Matt was very quiet. He asked a few questions in a puzzled way, and when Gus briefly told him that he had been sick and out of his mind, and that he had better not try to talk too much, he said but little, but seemed content to take everything as it came.

During all this time of waiting one of the party had constantly stood on guard outside, but there was no sign of the sheriff.

The hut floor, or elevator, as they took to calling it, was weighted down by placing a heavy stone upon it. Yet even that seemed to be unnecessary, for no attempt was made to pull it up, as far as was observed.

At length all was ready, and the start was made up the canyon, Belle declaring that she knew a way out that would land them directly on the Black Rock trail.

This proved to be correct.

After about an hour's ride they came to a point where the canyon apparently ended.

This was not the case, however, for another turn showed them a low opening under the rocky wall, through which the stream which had played such havoc on the night of the flood flowed into the darkness.

Belle rode fearlessly in, and followed the bed of the stream, with the others close behind her. In a few moments they came out alongside the mountain trail, which had been taken by Gus and the guide.

After that it was a quick run to Black Rock without further adventure.

They found that the sheriff had preceded them with his prisoners, Tom Treadway and Jack Wicks being among them.

Colonel Tolkins fixed up a story to suit the occasion, and spouted away in Bill Biggins' bar-room about his suffering while a prisoner with the Gopher gang, and how his nephew had helped him to escape.

Gus was present when he met the sheriff at the hotel, and saw that that official had no suspicion as to who it was that had been at the hut.

Then Gus did the wisest thing he possibly could have done—took the first train for Boise City, Matt and Belle going with him.

Colonel Tolkins and Silas Stump, to whom Gus paid all he had promised, saw him off.

If Gus had been the rascally old lawyer's own son he could not have shown more affection at parting than he did.

A quick run to New York followed.

Gus parted with Belle at Buffalo, where the girl had friends, but he did not see the last of Matt until he had delivered him safe in his father's arms at the Grand Central depot where, in response to Gus' telegram, the old banker was waiting.

(To be continued.)

GOOD READING

A STAR BIGGER THAN BETELGEUSE

More than 30,000 times larger than the earth, Mira, which appears as but a speck in the sky, has replaced the famous Betelgeuse as the heaven's second largest known star, having an angular diameter of about 250,000,000 miles, according to measurements just completed at the Mount Wilson Observatory of the Carnegie Institution of Washington.

Antares alone, having a diameter of about 400,000,000 miles, outranks this newly measured celestial giant, which until now has defied measurement since 1596, when its wonders were first discovered by the ancient astronomer Fabricius. With a diameter of only 8,000 miles, our own earth could be buried in one of the remotest corners of Mira.

The measurements were obtained by Dr. Francis G. Pease with the twenty-foot Michelson interferometer attached to the observatory's 100-inch telescope, and the achievement constitutes the first successful measurement of a variable star with definite period of light variation. It was with the same interferometer that the first measurements of Betelgeuse were obtained about four ears ago.

NEW COMET TO VISIT OUR HEAVENS

A faint comet which may, however, become bright enough to be seen by the unaided eye as a small patch of light, has been discovered by Prof. Richard Schorr of the Bergedorf Observatory, near Hamburg, Germany, according to advices received at Cambridge by Dr. Harlow Shapley, director of the Harvard College Observatory.

The celestial visitor is said to be Tuttle's comet which was first discovered in 1790 by P. F. Mechain at the Paris Observatory. After this, it was lost until 1858 when C. W. Tuttle, then at the Harvard Observatory, rediscovered it and found that it was periodic, returning to the neighborhood of the earth every fourteen years. Now it has returned for the fifty time since his observation.

At present it is of the eleventh magnitude, so that it can only be seen with the aid of a telescope of moderate power. It is in the constellation of the Sextant, below the bright star Regulus, which is directly south about 8 o'clock in the evening. Regulus is at the end of the handle of the "Sickle," a group of stars in the constellation of the Lion resembling that gardening implement. The comet is moving toward the northeast so that it is coming into a better position for observation. As it is not a very large comet, however, and when nearest, is farther away from the earth than the sun, we will not get a very close view of it at the best.

U. S. WILL MAKE "CURED" BANKNOTES

The Treasury has made plans for printing more paper money in the next fiscal year than ever has been turned out by the American Government in any other twelve months in history.

Orders have been prepared for purchase of 200,000,000 sheets of distinctive silk fibre paper, from each sheet of which eight pieces of currency are made, and beginning July 1 the great Bureau of Engraving and Printing will be run at maximum capacity to meet the nation's paper money requirements. An order for 25,000,000 sheets already has gone to the manufacturers, and this installment will be delivered in three weeks.

Announcement of the Treasury's program, made recently, disclosed that never in any one year before had orders for money paper exceeded 150,000,000 sheets. That quantity was ordered during the year now coming to a close, and it was about 20 per cent. greater than ever was used before in a like period.

Coincidentally with announcement of the printing program, Assistant Secretary Dewey, whose job it is to see there is plenty of money available in the country, made known that the Treasury would take its first step July 1 toward building up a currency reserve.

By this method it is hoped the life of the paper money may be prolonged. An opportunity will be had for "curing" the money before it goes into active service, and this process is expected to keep it from fraying, cracking and otherwise going to pieces so easily.

The life of the \$1 bill now is only about eight months, whereas Treasury experts figure it should be about a year. In pre-war days the average \$1 bill would wear about fourteen or fifteen months, but times have changed. Mr. Dewey is convinced that high prices, use of automobiles, the necessities of commerce and industry and modern ideas and habits compel the carrying of more money.

Thus the silver dollar has fallen into disuse and the dollar bill and bills of larger denomination have come into greater use, with the result they wear out more quickly.

The Treasury has not been able since the war to print money fast enough to permit establishment of a reserve. Mr. Dewey said the bills now printed and placed in circulation within ten days, and tests have proved they should not pass through the printing stages in less than a month and should be "cured" or "seasoned" two or three weeks longer.

With the gigantic program outlined for the next fiscal year it is his belief current demands can be met and a return to the proper process of handling the bills accomplished.

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FAME AND FORTUNE WEEKLY

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ITEMS OF INTEREST

SINK SHIPS AT LOW BRIDGES

Low bridges span the River Spree in Germany and interfere seriously with the passage of excursion steamers loaded with holiday makers from Berlin. Hence a new steamer is being built, to carry 1,000 passengers, that will be equipped with large tanks which when filled with water, will submerge the hull sufficiently to pass under the lowest bridge on the river.

BOUNTY OFFERED FOR FLIES

School children who like to kill flies may earn money from the warfare this summer. A woman's club of Yakima, Wash., has offered to pay 5 cents for each two-ounce bottle filled with dead flies. The insects are a nuisance in the orchards and a menace to the health of the workers in the fruit industry. The flies, as well as yellow jackets and bees, are attracted by the ripe fruit of the packing houses.

SACRED ADAM'S APPLE

What is said to be the costliest fruit in the world is the "etrog," or sacred Jewish citron, sometimes known as the paradise or Adam's apple, a single perfect specimen of which will sell for as much as \$25. Outwardly resembling a lemon, the etrog is said to be so extremely aromatic that one suffices to perfume a whole room. It has a thick rind, bitter and seedy pulp and scanty juice of a sweet-sour taste, and is suitable for making jelly. *Popular Mechanics* says it is used in ceremonies during the Feast of the Tabernacles.

ANCIENT STONE AXES ARE FOUND IN IOWA

Two stone axes which may prove to be among the earliest antiquities thus far found within the limits of the United States have been brought to the Smithsonian Institution by H. L. Straight, a brick manufacturer of Adel, Ia., says *Science*. These ancient implements are crudely shaped and were discovered under twenty-five feet of apparently undisturbed clay, according to the information given to Neil M. Judd, archeologist of the

United States National Museum, who is investigating the find. The digging of a trench for the laying of a narrow gauge railway in the clay pits used by Mr. Straight led to the unearthing of the tools. On account of the possible importance of the discovery, the Smithsonian Institution is planning to send a geologist to make a careful study of the site to determine whether the axes are as antique as the depth of burial indicates. Mr. Judd pointed out that before the extreme antiquity of the axes could be determined, the report of the geologist showing geologic age of the strata in which they were buried must be received.

LAUGHS

"The true secret of success is to find out what the people want." "And then give it to them?" "No; corner it."

New Boarder—What's the row upstairs? Landlady—It's that professor of hyonotism trying to get his wife's permission to go out this evening.

Mrs. Casey—Sure, th' goat has ate all av Maggie's piano music. Mr. Casey—Thank heavens! Now, if he'd only ate th' pianny, Oi'd pension him for loife!

"My doctor told me that paper money is simply alive with germs." "He did?" "Yes, and then he accepted a two-dollar bill for giving me the information."

"I'm glad we didn't get any duplicates," said the bride as they inspected the wedding gifts. "I wouldn't mind if somebody would duplicate that check your father gave us," replied the bridegroom.

Romantic Old Maid—Tell me, have you ever picked up any bottles on the beach? Boatman—Werry often, miss! Romantic Old Maid—And have you found anything in them? Boatman—Not a blessed drop, miss.

Mrs. Newedd (complainingly)—When we go anywhere now, we have to take the old street car. Before our marriage you always called a taxi. Newedd—Yes; that's the reason we have to take a street car now.

"It is a marvel to me how a citizen can so suddenly transform himself into a soldier." "Oh, we have a chance to study tactics all the time. Every married man, for instance, has to be a master of strategy."

Mrs. True Genteel—Good-morning, Mrs. Carrots. Going to New York to do a little shopping? Mrs. Gusby Carrots (whose husband has acquired sudden riches)—No, I've just returned. I bought a nice Rubens this morning, and, I declare! when I called at my husband's office he told me he had bought a Rembrandt by the same artist vesterday afternoon.

POINTS OF INTEREST

A PERSIAN BARBER

Even so prosaic occupation as that of shaving seems invested with a share of romance in Persia. The shop we visited was a typical one—a square room, with one side open to the street. In the center was a tiny bed of flowers sunk in the floor, from the middle of which rose an octagonal stone column three feet high. The capital of the column formed a receptacle for the water in which the barber dipped his hand as he shaved his customer's scalp—in Persia they do not lather. The shop was very clean. In two recesses stood four vases filled with flowers and the implements of the barber's art—scissors, razors, lancets, hand-mirrors, large pincers to extract teeth, branding-irons to cauterize the arteries in amputating limbs, strong combs, but not a hair-brush, for that implement is never used by Persians. From the barber's girdle hung a round, copper water-bottle, his strop, and a pouch to hold his instruments. In his bosom was a small mirror, the presentation of which to his customers is a sign that the work is finished and that the man waits for his fee. The barber shaves the heads of his customers, dyes their beards, pulls their teeth, blisters and bleeds them when ailing, sets their broken bones and shampoos their bodies.

EGYPTIAN PYRAMIDS

There are in all seventy of the Egyptian pyramids. Seven of these are at Gizeh, five at Abusir, eleven at Sakkarah, five at Dashur, and the remainder are scattered throughout Egypt. Some of these are built of stone and some of brick. The principal ones, including the great pyramid of Cheops, are at Gizeh. The great pyramid was erected as a mausoleum for Khufu, or Cheops, of the fourth Egyptian dynasty, who reigned about 3800 B. C. It is constructed of stone, transported for the most part over a causeway eight miles long, extending from the quarries to the site. It is said that the construction of this causeway occupied about one hundred thousand men for ten years.

Twenty years more were consumed in the building of the pyramid itself, which is 450 feet 9 inches in height and 646 feet square at the base, and is estimated to contain 6,800,000 tons of stone. The four sides exactly face the four cardinal points. This is the case with all the pyramids. The interior contains what is called the king's chamber and the queen's chamber—in which sarcophagi the bodies of the sovereign and his queen were found—and numerous small chambers. Various theories have been advanced as to the religious and astronomical uses intended in the construction of the great pyramid and several of the minor ones, which, as they are for the most part conjectural and could not be fairly presented in anything less than a large volume, cannot be given here.

A RAT STORY

The following story is related of an old man who keeps a tavern "out West." One day a tramp walked into the bar-room, and, represent-

ing himself as the champion rat-killer of the States, told the proprietress that, in consideration of a good dinner, he would destroy every rat upon the premises. To this she readily consented, as the house was indeed terribly infested with the vermin. The tramp was marshalled into the dining-room, and enough eatables were set before him for three ordinary men, which he went through in double quick time; he then smacked his lips, and called for something to drink to wash the food down. The landlady gave him a flask of "old rye," and by the time it was gone he declared himself satisfied, and said, "Now, then, clear the room of everything, get me a club, and I'm ready for business." Curious to know how he was going to proceed, and chuckling to herself as she thought how cheaply she was getting rid of the rats, she soon placed a club in his hands. He rolled up his sleeves, rubbed his hands together, and, holding the club aloft, yelled, "Now, then, old woman, trot out your rats; I feel like annihilating a couple of thousand of them!"

WILD WEST WEEKLY

LATEST ISSUES

- 1156 Young Wild West at the Widow's Claim; or, Arietta's Brave Defense.
- 1157 " and the Range Boss; or, Crooked Work at the Sleepy J.
- 1158 " Caught by Savages; or, Arietta's Daring Rescue.
- 1159 " and the Mexican Deadshot; or, The Shooting Match On the Border.
- 1160 " at Hard Luck; or, Arietta and the Stream of Gold.
- 1161 " Defending a Ranch; or, Besieged by Cattle Rustlers.
- 1162 " and the Miner's Trap; or, Arietta's Great Shot.
- 1163 Young Wild West at Ace High Fair; or The Liveliest Time on Record."
- 1164 " Risky Ride; or, Arietta and the Gulch Gang.
- 1165 " Buckskin Band; or, The Sheriff's Big Mistake.
- 1166 " Double Triumph; or, Arietta Saving the Flag.
- 1167 " and "Cowboy Jack"; or, Spoiling a Ranch Raid.
- 1168 " Only Chance; or, Arietta's Quick Throw.
- 1169 " Desperate Charge; or, The Shot That Beat the Redskins.
- 1170 Young Wild West at Gold Dust Flat; or, Arietta and the Secret Band.
- 1171 " in Danger; or, Helping the Trapped Cavalrymen.
- 1172 Young Wild West and the Dutchman's Claim; or, Arietta Defending Her Life.
- 1173 " Taming the Cowpunchers; or, The Hard Crowd of Bull Tail Ranch.
- 1174 " After the "Vultures"; or, Arietta and the Band of Ten.
- 1175 " Calling the Two Gun Man; or, Saving a Sheriff's Life.
- 1176 " and the Boy Ranchero; or, Helping a Tenderfoot to Success.
- 1177 " and "Ginger Jake"; or The Boss of Gimlet Gulch.
- 1178 " and the Choctaw Chief; or, Arietta Defying the Redskins.
- 1179 " Defying an Ambush; or, Arietta Leading the Cavalry.
- 1180 " Saved By a Signal; or, Arietta and the Vanishing Light.

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HERE AND THERE

HOW PARROTS ARE CAPTURED

To capture parrots the natives of Brazil watch the meeting places, and when the fledglings are a few days old the feathers of one of the wings are trimmed. Later these birds are easily captured, placed on perches and taken to the nearest village.

AMETHYST'S POWERS

Amethyst is traditionally supposed to have the virtue of warding off or curing drunkenness. The word itself, which comes from the Greek, literally means "not intoxicating." The amethyst also has been held to have the power to make men shrewd in business deals.

STRANGE FREAKS OF BULLETS

At the battle of Peach Orchard, Va., when McClellan was in command of the army, a Michigan infantryman fell to the ground as if shot dead, and was left lying in a heap as the regiment changed position. The bullet that had hit him first struck the barrel of his gun, then glanced and struck off a button of his coat, tore the watch out of his vest pocket, and struck the man just over the heart, where it was stopped by a song-book in his shirt pocket. He was unconscious for three-quarters of an hour, and it was a full month before the black-and-blue spot disappeared.

At Pittsburg Landing a member of the 12th Michigan Infantry stopped to give a wounded man a drink from his canteen. While in this act, a bullet aimed at his breast struck the canteen and buried itself in the leg of a horse. The canteen was split open and dropped to the ground in halves. At the second battle of Bull Run a New York infantryman was passing tobacco to a comrade when a bullet struck the plug, glanced off and buried itself in a knapsack. The tobacco was rolled up like a ball of shavings and carried a hundred feet away. Directly in the line of the bullet was the head of a lieutenant, and, had not the bullet been deflected, he would certainly have been wounded or killed thereby. As it was, he had both eyes filled with tobacco dust and had to be led to the rear.

At Brandon Station one of Custer's troopers had his left stirrup-strap cut away by a grape-shot, which passed between his leg and the horse, blistering the skin as if a red-hot iron had been used. He dismounted to ascertain the extent of his injuries, and as he bent over, a bullet knocked his hat off and killed his horse. In the same fight was a trooper who had suffered several days with a toothache. In a hand-to-hand conflict he received a pistol-ball in the right cheek. It knocked out his aching tooth and passed out through the left corner of his mouth, taking along a part of an upper tooth. The joy of getting rid of the toothache was so great that the trooper could not be made to go to the rear to have his wound dressed.

HE SAVED THE BANK

"We've got a brave clerk in our neck of the woods who some day will make his mark in the world," said a Cheyenne, Wyo., correspondent.

"He is only 19 years old, but he's a hummer. Several years ago, while the president of the bank was away, the cashier was taken sick and in a few hours was in a delirious state. The young Napoleon was left in sole charge of the bank. Some evil-disposed person started the story one afternoon that the institution was in a bad way, and intimated that the president had skipped the country and that the cashier's illness was only a bluff.

"Before night it was evident that there would be a run on the institution the next morning. The young clerk knew there was scarcely money enough to last an hour. He had no one to advise him, but he acted promptly. He called on the leading hardware merchant and held a brief conference. Then this young Napoleon went home, where he found a committee from the depositors awaiting him. He did not wait for them to speak, but made this bluff: 'I refuse to discuss business with you. There will be \$50,000 in gold here in the morning, and there is a like amount in the safe. You may draw out every dollar you have deposited and we'll be glad to get rid of your small accounts.' Then he turned on his heel and left the committee.

"Bright and early there assembled at the bank the creditors. Just before time for opening the doors an express wagon was driven up, in which were seated two heavily armed men, one of them the watchman of the bank. A pathway through the crowd was made, and the watchman began carrying into the bank canvas bags containing gold coin, as plainly indicated by the prominent marks. Some of the bags were marked '\$5,000' and one or two '\$10,000.' The people saw these bags, heard the clink of the metal, and believing the bank was 'O. K.,' were about to move away.

"Just as the last bag of gold was handed into the door the young financier threw the bank open. The crowd did not make any effort to reach the paying-teller's window. 'Come on now, every one of you,' shouted the clerk. No one responding, he made another bluff. 'You must come and get your money. We don't want your accounts any more. Here, Jim Hartley, take this and sign this receipt in full. Here, Bill Wyman, come and get your dust.' He insisted on their taking the money. Just at this juncture the committee came and begged the clerk to 'stop, for God's sake.' They almost got down on their knees to ask the bank to keep their money. The young Napoleon finally consented, but declared if there was ever 'any more nonsense he would throw every depositor's money into the street.' The crowd departed happy and confident that the bank was one of the strongest institutions of its kind in America.

"Their confidence might have been shaken had they known the canvas bags marked '\$5,000 gold,' etc., and bedaubed with red sealing wax, contained nothing more or less than iron washers, which the young clerk had purchased from the hardware man who had otherwise assisted in the deception, he being convinced of the soundness of the bank. The two men the young Napoleon insisted on paying the bank had long wished to get rid of."

THE LIBERTY BOYS OF '76

Tales of the Revolution

We can still supply the following numbers of the above Weekly:

- 1212 The Liberty Boys at Trinty Fire; or, Capturing a Dangerous Spy.
 1213 " Helping Washington; or, Great Work at White Marsh.
 1214 " Young Scout; or, Fighting the Redcoat Raiders.
 1215 " In Frog Swamp; or, General Marion's Daring Deed.
 1216 " on the Border; or, Exposed to Many Perils.
 1217 " Nerve; or, Not Afraid of the King's Minions.
 1218 " Defiance; or, "Catch and Hang Us, if You Can."
 1219 " to the Rescue; or, A Host Within Themselves.
 1220 " Narrow Escape; or, A Neck and Neck Race with Death.
 1221 " Pluck; or, Undaunted by Odds.
 1222 " Peril; or, Threatened from All Sides.
 1223 " Luck; or, Fortune Favors the Brave.
 1224 " Trap and What They Caught in It.
 1225 " Puzzled; or, The Tories Clever Scheme.
 1226 " Great Stroke; or, Capturing a British Man-of-War.
 1227 " Trapped; or, The Beautiful Tory.
 1228 " Big Mistake; or, What Might Have Been.
 1229 " Fine Work; or, Doing Things Up Brown
 1230 " at Bay; or, The Closest Call of All.
 1231 " On Their Mettle; or, Making it Warm for the Redcoats.
 1232 " Double Victory; or, Downing the Redcoats and Tories.
 1233 " Suspected; or, Taken for British Spies.
 1234 " Clever Trick; or, Teaching the Redcoats a Thing or Two.
 1235 " Good Spy Work; or, With the Redcoats in Philadelphia.
 1236 " Battle Cry; or, With Washington at the Brandywine.
 1237 " Wild Ride; or, A Dash to Save a Fort.
 1238 " In a Fix; or, Threatened by Reds and Whites.
 1239 " Big Contract; or, Holding Arnold in Check.
 1240 " Shadowed; or, After Dick Slater for Revenge.
 1241 " Signal; or, At the Clang of the Bell.
 1242 " Fake Surrender; or, The Ruse That Succeeded.
 1243 " Plot; or, The Plan That Won.
 1244 " Darn Work; or, Risking Life for Liberty's Cause.
 1245 " Duped; or, The Friend Who Was An Enemy.
 1246 " Push Times; or, Revelling in British Gold.
 1247 " Prize and How They Won It.
 1248 " Great Haul! or, Taking Everything in Sight.
 1249 " In a Snare; or, Almost Trapped.
 1250 " Brave Rescue; or, In the Nick of Time.
 1251 " Big Day; or, Doing Business by Wholesale.
 1252 " Net; or, Catching the Redcoats and Tories.
 1253 " Worried; or, The Disappearance of Dick Slater.
 1254 " Iron Grip; or, Squeezing the Redcoats.
 1255 " Success; or, Doing What They Set Out to Do.
 1256 " Setback; or, Defeated But Not Disgraced.
 1257 " In Toryville; or, Dick Slater's Fearful Risk.
 1258 " Aroused; or, Striking Strong Blows for Liberty.
 1259 " Triumph; or, Beating the Redcoats at Their Own Game.
 1260 " Scare; or, A Miss as Good as a Mile.
 1261 " Danger; or, Foes On All Sides.
 1262 " Flight; or, A Very Narrow Escape.
 1263 " Strategy; or, Outgeneraling the Enemy.
 1264 " Warm Work; or, Showing the Redcoats How to Fight.
 1265 " Push; or, Bound to Get There.
 1266 " Desperate Charge; or, With "Mad Anthony" at Stony Point.
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 166 West 23rd Street,
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FROM ALL POINTS

WHITE AND BLACK PEPPER

Black pepper and white pepper are both produced from the peer berry, grown on the pepper plant, a perennial vine or climbing shrub. Originally a native of the East Indies, the pepper plant now grows in a number of tropical countries, particularly in Southern India, Borneo, Sumatra, Ceylon, Siam, the West Indies, the Philippines and French Indo-China. The berry growing on the pepper plant is picked before it is ripe and then dried and ground. In this way ordinary black pepper is obtained. To obtain white pepper the black pepper berry is allowed to ripen and the coatings of the berry are removed before grinding.

LARGEST DINOSAUR FOUND

Word has just been received of the discovery of the largest fossil dinosaur bones on record by an expedition, under W. E. Cutler of the British Museum, which has for the past year been working in the dinosaur beds in Tanganyika, formerly German East Africa. The prize find so far uncovered is a shoulder blade six feet two inches across. The dinosaur beds of Tanganyika were discovered and partly worked by the Germans before the war, and many interesting remains have been found there. There is a close resemblance between the dinosaur fauna of Africa and that of Western North America, especially in the case of the Stegosaurus or armored dinosaurs. Even the newly discovered giant has American kin, though this particular dinosaur is represented in American finds only by two limb bones.

VALUE OF MINUTES

Perhaps there never was given a more striking instance of the value of minutes than the following: A party of ladies and gentlemen were shown through a very large carpet establishment a few days ago. They were permitted to look into every nook and corner of the building except one. At the bottom of the stairway they came upon a closed door, upon which were the words "Positively No Admittance." The curiosity of the ladies was now awakened, and one inquired:

"What is up there?"

"That is our workshop," explained the representative of the firm. "We have one hundred and fifty women on that floor sewing carpets."

"Oh, I should like to see them at work," said the fair questioner, with a playfully beseeching look.

"I am sorry that I cannot take you up there," replied the firm's representative, "but the rules are very strict. Really, there is nothing worth looking at, and there are no trade secrets there. The reason why the firm interdicts visitors is because the presence of strangers in the room causes every sewing-woman to look up, and takes her attention off her work from one to five minutes. Suppose each woman loses an average of two minutes. With one hundred and fifty women that means a loss to the firm of three hundred minutes, or five hours of time. That is too much to lose when we are working under a full head of steam, as we are now."

LITTLE ADS

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BIG MONEY and fast sales every owner buys gold initials for his auto. You charge \$1.50, make \$1.44 profit. 10 orders daily, easy. Samples and information free. World Monogram Co., Dept. 70, Newark, N. J.

NEW CAMERA takes and finishes photos in one minute. Make money selling cameras, or taking photos. Exclusive territory. Crown Co., Dept. 967, Norwalk, Conn.

HELP WANTED

DETECTIVES NEEDED EVERYWHERE.

Work home or travel, experience unnecessary. Write George R. Wagner, former Govt. Detective, 1968 Broadway, N. Y.

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MARRY—MARRIAGE DIRECTORY with photos and descriptions free. Pay when married. The Exchange, Dept. 545, Kansas City, Mo.

MARRY—Write for big new directory with photos and descriptions. Free. National Agency, Dept. A, 4606, Sta. E., Kansas City, Mo.

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SWEETHEARTS for everybody. Stamped envelopes for proposal. The Lily Club, Station H, Cleveland, Ohio.

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THE ELEPHANT "JUMBO"

Jumbo was a large African elephant captured when young and taken from Egypt to Europe when he was four feet high. When he was removed from the Jardin des Plantes in Paris to the Royal Zoological Gardens in London (the London Zoo). For 20-odd years the animal remained there and was very popular with the children. In 1882 he was purchased for \$10,000 by P. T. Barnum, the American showman, to form one of his attractions of Barnum's Circus. With some difficulty Jumbo was placed on ship-board and brought to this country. He was exhibited for three years, when he was accidentally killed by a railway train at St. Thomas, Canada, on Sept. 15, 1885, while crossing the tracks, to be loaded into the circus train. His age at the time of his death was from 29 to 31 years. His height was 11 feet 6 inches and he weighed six tons. His skeleton is at the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C., and his skin (mounted) at the Barnum Museum, Tufts College.



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